



In G2 Health today: Why the bone disease osteoporosis is increasingly affecting men

+ Jerome Burne on the hidden agenda around the cliffs + Molly Innes writes her diary of an alcoholic

Police name crash dead as UK students

Jane Walker in Madrid, Jon Henley and Philip Wilson

A SPANISH judge yesterday launched an investigation into the head-on collision that killed five young British tourists near Valencia as southern Europe's congested road network experienced its busiest weekend of the year.

The five were returning to their apartment in Benidorm after a day trip to Valencia as they neared the end of their week-long holiday to celebrate the completion of their university degrees.

Their rented Ford Escort collided with a lorry during a heavy storm on the N-332 coastal road in Oliva on Sunday. It took the local fire brigade several hours to free the victims' bodies from the wreckage.

All five are believed to have died instantly. They were named yesterday as Vivian Obiajulu Egesi, 21, Ian Boatwain, 21, Jaimini Kara, 21, and Falilat Oluemilekun Dsawodu, 24, all from London, and Samuel Ota Imaga, 23, from Kent. All were science students at King's College, London, and graduated with second-class honours degrees on July 24.

Four days later, they flew from Gatwick to Alicante with five fellow students and had been due to return home today.

The other five members of the group, travelling in another car ahead of the Escort, saw the accident.

They were said to be unhurt but suffering shock, and are expected to return to Britain after giving statements to investigators.

The 48-year-old lorry driver was unhurt.

The five dead were among 50 killed on Spanish roads alone over three days in southern Europe's busiest holiday period.

Attempts to calm the stampede by millions of tourists to Mediterranean beaches and cooler mountains were frustrated by the fact that August 1, the traditional date for the start of month-long holidays in France and Spain, fell on a Saturday this year.

Arthur Lucas, the college principal, said staff who taught the students were devastated. "They were all hard working and very promising students who were a great contributing presence to their departments. They have been



Road death rates

Per 100,000 population in selected countries	Rate
Sweden	0.4
Denmark	0.4
Netherlands	0.5
Finland	0.5
Japan	0.5
Canada	0.5
USA	0.5
France	0.5
Germany	0.5
Italy	0.5
Spain	0.5
UK	0.5
Portugal	0.5

killed senselessly just as they were about to start out on their lives and careers."

Ms Egesi's aunt, Dorothy Egesi, said the family from Camberwell, south London, was stunned. "I can't believe it."

Spanish police suspect torrential rain, high winds or driver error — perhaps forgetting to drive on the right — may have caused the crash.

The stretch of the road where the crash took place is straight with two lanes, but the adjacent motorway that has replaced the N-332. It is thought they took the road to avoid paying motorway toll charges.

Despite a crackdown on drink driving and television safety campaigns, traffic accidents in Spain continue to increase.

More than 4,500 people died last year, making Spanish roads among the most dangerous in Europe.

A weekend traffic calming operation, codenamed Operation Exodus, did not stop 25-mile long queues forming on the A7 motorway that runs from the French border to Malaga.

A publicity campaign aimed to persuade holiday-makers to stagger their journeys. Lorries were banned from using the motorways over the peak period.

"Driving abroad for Britons requires absolute 100 per cent concentration, especially as you are on unfamiliar territory," an AA spokeswoman said yesterday. "Drainage on Spanish roads is poor, and we advise any tourists caught in heavy downpours to pull off the road rather than risk carrying on in adverse conditions."

In France, the death toll on the roads was lower than normal for the weekend as the heavy traffic was reduced to a crawl.

According to the national road information service, Saturday saw a near-record 405 miles of tailbacks the length and breadth of the country as the "Aoutiens" — the French who take their holidays in August — headed south, crossing "Juillettistes" on their way back home.

"We had 22 miles of solid tailback outside Lyon by 6am," a police spokesman said.

"By lunchtime it was solid from Bordeaux to Bayonne."

The French government is pushing through new road safety legislation in a bid to halve the number of annual fatalities over the next four years. In 1997, there were 7,969 deaths — an average of 22 a day.

In Italy, some 12 million motorists took to the roads at the weekend, amid sweltering heat and widespread brush fires.

Italians are tending to take shorter but more frequent breaks from work to avoid the crowds.

Police vans are on 24-hour duty in many motorway service stations.

"The idea is to protect the public from thieves and create a climate of security so that a tired motorist can take a nap," a police spokeswoman said.

The Germans manage things even better.

Holidays are staggered, state by state, so severe traffic jams tend to disrupt the orderly flow of the autobahn only on bank holidays.



The remains of the car in which five British students died as (below) holiday traffic brought the A7 highway at El Vendrell, eastern Spain, to a standstill



'Mayor' Ken hopes for Labour ticket to victory

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

KEN Livingstone expressed optimism yesterday that the Labour hierarchy was about to do a U-turn and allow him to stand as mayor of London as he launched his manifesto for improving the capital.

The former chairman of the Greater London Council was initially ruled out by the Labour leadership for fear that he would embark on a left-wing agenda at odds with Downing Street.

But he said the campaign would be difficult for Labour and the party "recognises you have to run your strongest candidate".

No-one had won as much support as he had in the polls. The junior transport minister, Glenda Jackson, and the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, have been mentioned as alternatives but Mr Livingstone said the latter would "be hard to prise away from his beloved health service".

The MP for Brent East insisted he had detected a change of heart in recent weeks. "Twice in the last month, Peter Mandelson has been nice to me. That has to be a good sign."

When the idea of a mayor was first put forward, the Labour hierarchy claimed Mr Livingstone had a poor record while running the Greater London Council.

Mr Livingstone would like the election for mayor and the accompanying London assembly brought forward to May next year in line with elections for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. It would be "a festival of democracy", he said.

In the five-page manifesto, Mr Livingstone concentrates on transport, an issue that causes most concern among Londoners.

He wants to shift the balance away from the car to public transport, and would like the city to be more friendly towards cyclists and pedestrians, with the pedestrianisation of Soho.

The mayor should use public transport because people would not tolerate a mayor and assembly members being "swished around London in chauffeur-driven cars", a proposal that could be interpreted as a swipe at ministers.

He suggests improving the bus system to ease congestion on the Tube and reintroducing conductors to speed up buses. Rail services should be more frequent. Despite London's deprivation, "Londoners are still subsidising the rest of the country. For each pound London puts into the national exchequer, we get back only 75p."

"It is clearly no longer acceptable that Londoners should be supporting a level of public spending in Gordon Brown's constituency (Dunfermline East) which if applied to London would transform 'all our problems' by providing another £4.4 billion a year for vital investment in modernising our city."

He wants the mayor to appeal to the City corporation to help fund programmes of reconstruction. Among projects the new-loving MP puts forward are a world-class aquarium.

The police would be answerable to a new police authority, with speedier removal of corrupt and racist officers.

He proposes to revitalise the South Bank and provide free access to Kew Gardens and London Zoo through a passenger tax at Heathrow.

The pledges

- Shift balance to public transport, improve bus services to take pressure off Tube and ban cars from Soho
- Give London the same subsidies as Scotland to help reduce unemployment and poverty
- Tax passengers going through Heathrow to fund free admission to London Zoo and Kew Gardens. World-class aquarium
- Improve environment and restore integrated waste disposal system
- Bring forward mayoral elections to next May

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Biggest fall for 6 years in manufacturing output

Mark Atkinson Economics Correspondent

B RITAIN'S beleaguered manufacturing sector shrank in July at its fastest rate since the depths of the last recession as the weakness of export markets was compounded by a steep downturn in domestic demand, according to a survey published yesterday.

With the not spreading from foreign to home sales, firms responded by speeding up the pace of job cuts and slashing output by the biggest amount for six years, said the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply.

The result was that the overall level of activity in manufacturing declined at its quickest rate since September 1992, when the pound was forced out of the ERM.

City economists said the Bank of England's monetary policy committee (MPC) which meets tomorrow and on Thursday amid speculation that it might increase the cost of borrowing one more time to curb wage inflation — would ignore the gloomy message at its peril.

Although manufacturing accounted for only 25 per cent of the economy's output, against the relatively more buoyant service sector's 65 per cent, the deepening recession in industry could easily spread to the wider economy since the two were inextricably linked, said David Coleman, of CIBC Wood Gundy Oppenheimer.

"There's inevitably some overlap — manufacturers buy in services and they also employ people who buy them. But you can't just draw a line between the two sectors."

He urged the MPC to leave monetary policy on hold, arguing that worries about wage inflation would soon subside once the dollar began to strengthen decisively.

"I don't think employers will continue to accept higher wage agreements when their markets are disappearing. It just won't happen," he said.

'Deepening recession could easily spread to wider economy'

The CIPS survey is the most up-to-date guide to the state of manufacturing, although it has been running only since the beginning of 1992.

In the early part of the year it painted a more optimistic picture than the Government's figures but has taken a distinct turn for the worse since April, registering four consecutive monthly contractions of the sector.

The initial weakness was felt in the export sector, with firms being hit by the strong pound, which makes foreign sales more expensive, and falling demand in the wake of Asia's financial crisis.

But the July survey also recorded a fall in orders from the home market for the first time since the early 1990s recession.

"Manufacturers attributed the loss of orders in the home market to both greater competition from cheap imports arising from the strength of the pound and a general easing in UK demand, especially on the high street," said the report.

Shadow trade and industry secretary John Redwood urged the Government to change policy in the wake of the report. He said: "Another day, another dreadful survey. How much more evidence does the Government need before the Secretary of State (for Trade and Industry) persuades the Chancellor that Labour's economic policy has gone horribly wrong and manufacturing is facing great difficulties?"

The Chancellor should listen to Conservative advice and cut public spending and increase taxes. It is the only way to take some of the pressure off manufacturers and exporters. The Government is conning the public when it says it is ending boom and bust. For many manufacturers only bust is on offer."

While expressing sympathy for manufacturers, the Treasury said official figures showed manufacturing output was broadly flat and in line with its forecast in the Budget. Most outside forecasters expect a recovery in industry next year, it added.

Fight to prevent runaway M15 man being sent back

Richard Norton-Taylor

LAWYERS acting for David Shayler said yesterday they would vigorously fight the Government's demand for his extradition from France as the M15 renegade faced a long period in a Paris prison cell awaiting a possible criminal trial for allegedly breaking the Official Secrets Act.

The Government has 40 days to prepare its case though John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil rights group who is acting for Mr Shayler, is expected to visit him this week with a French defence lawyer.

The European convention on extradition "generally prevents extradition in cases where it could be shown the alleged offence was political", said Mr Wadham who added that Mr Shayler's disclosures about the activities of the security and intelligence services were in the public interest.

It emerged last night that John Morris, the Attorney-General, approved the secret prosecution only after Mr Shayler was arrested by plain-clothes police in a Paris hotel late on Saturday.

As it remained unclear what prompted his sudden arrest, government lawyers said the media was free to publish his main new allegation — that M16, the overseas intelligence agency, plotted to assassinate the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi — on the grounds that what they called the "central claim" was not true.

"Something false is not damaging," a Home Office spokeswoman said last night.

But a spokeswoman, for Mr Morris added to the confusion over the veracity of Mr Shayler's allegations by saying it was publication of the details of his claims that would be damaging.

It also emerged last night that Mr Shayler had given further information about the alleged Gaddafi plot to foreign newspapers, including America's Time magazine. The Government faces the prospect of publication abroad, with echoes of the failed attempt 12 years ago to suppress Spycatcher, the memoirs of the former M15 officer, Peter Wright.

David Wilshire, Tory MP for Spelthorpe, yesterday called for an urgent investigation into Mr Shayler's further claim that a number of IRA bombings — including the 1993 Bishopsgate blast in the City of London which killed a man — could have been avoided if M15 had been more efficient.

However, Tom King, the former Tory Northern Ireland secretary and chairman of the cross-party parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee, said he had no sympathy for Mr Shayler and his decision to speak out.

Isabelle Chauvin, deputy public prosecutor in Paris, said there was no time limit on the investigation to be carried out by her department, but it was likely to take a "matter of months".

Mr Wadham said anyone who wanted to get in touch with Mr Shayler, whose prison number is 269151F, could do so at the prison, 42 Rue de la Sante, 75014 Paris.

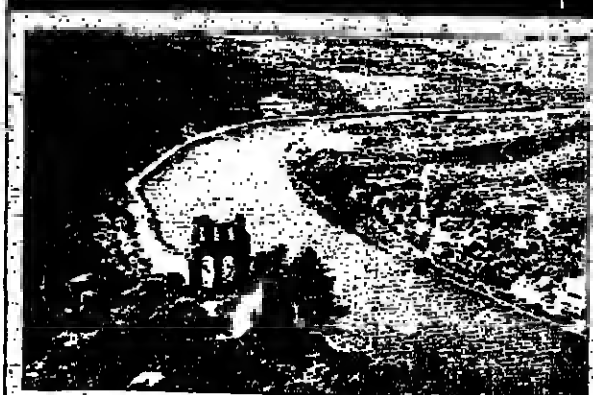
Gaddafi plot claim, page 5; Paul Greenacre, page 5; Leader comment, page 9

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مكتبة الجليل

Quarrel at work led to man being incarcerated for decades in the mental health system, after being wrongly diagnosed as schizophrenic

46 years locked up — for being deaf

When Leslie Brown finally emerged into the daylight, his new carers were astonished to find there was nothing wrong with him. **Luke Harding and David Brindle** report

WHEN Leslie Brown arrived at Long Grove mental hospital in Surrey he was just 23-years-old. He was neither insane, violent, nor a danger to the public. It was, in a sense, much simpler and more grandiosely tragic than that.

Mr Brown's misfortune was to be deaf, the result of meningitis and double pneumonia contracted as a baby. After being wrongly diagnosed as a schizophrenic he spent 46 years incarcerated in Britain's mental health system — longer, longer than the Guildford Four (a mere 14 years) and Birmingham Six (17 years) rolled into one.

Yesterday his case was highlighted by Sign, a charity working with deaf people with mental health problems, to illustrate how they are often failed by health and social services. An estimated 400 deaf people with assumed psychiatric disorders are accommodated in hospitals and staffed hostels at an annual cost of £1.5 million, according to the charity, which claimed many of them should not be there.

When Mr Brown finally emerged into the daylight three years ago, his new carers were astonished to discover there was, essentially, nothing wrong with him. He was recently taken off the register of patients with mental health problems. During the decades after his incarceration in 1950, it emerged Mr Brown had forgotten the sign language he had learned as a



Leslie Brown in his room in Balham, south London. He has relearned sign language in sheltered accommodation and now tells fellow residents how happy he is. PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

child and nobody had bothered to communicate with him. His original "crime" was to quarrel with a colleague while working as a temporary carpenter.

Now 70, and living in sheltered accommodation for deaf people in Balham, south London, Mr Brown yesterday refused to dwell on the past and said he was not angry. Asked about his time at Long Grove, he replied: "I didn't like it much." In 1970, he was transferred to the neighbouring West Park mental hospital in Surrey. He was released in March 1996 only when the hospital was closed. "I liked

West Park much better and could take lots of baths. There were grounds where I could walk by myself. There was time on the carpets, so I could slide my feet along," Mr Brown said.

"I'm an old man now and I've left all that behind. The past is closed and finished as far as I'm concerned," Lloyd Wint, project manager with Sign, which now cares for Mr Brown, says he was wrongly diagnosed as schizophrenic because nobody was able to interpret his behaviour correctly. He also was said to suffer from hallucinations and delusions.

"If he wanted a drink of milk, he would rush at you and grab you and knock you over because he didn't know how to sign for milk," Mr Wint said. "This was interpreted as violent behaviour. In the 1950s nobody wanted to communicate with deaf people. Sign language wasn't a thing they worked at."

When Mr Brown arrived at the project, he was unable to bath or shower himself, had little knowledge of personal hygiene and could not cook, shop or manage a budget. Two years later, he has relearned sign language, become quite independent, and

tells his fellow residents how happy he is. Mr Brown — a smoker who has bronchitis — now enjoys the odd pint and game of dominoes. Last week he went to the seaside at Eastbourne with an old friend. His single-bed room in a converted church is adorned with posters harking back to his boyhood ambition of enlisting in the army. He was recently taken off a list of patients with mental health needs.

Mr Brown is visited regularly by his sister Jean, and on occasion by his four other sisters, none of whom know sign language. His mother

Lydia died in 1986, while his father passed away in 1982 aged 58. Mr Brown grew up in east London, where he was well-liked by neighbours, and was educated in a special school in Crystal Palace, south London, until he was 16. It all went wrong while he worked as a temporary carpenter, though he has harked the incident from his mind. No official records have survived.

"He only got out because the mental hospital he was in closed down," said Sue Wilding, an executive with Sign. "Leslie was locked up with people who could not commu-

nicate with him. Tragically, this kind of thing is still happening."

A survey by Sign published yesterday, of all hospitals, hostels and homes caring for deaf people with mental illness, revealed that more than a third did not need the level of care and containment they were receiving. But a majority had "very high" levels of functional impairment with problems of cleanliness, cooking, shopping, use of transport, or budgeting.

The deaf people were on average more than 10 years younger than other mental patients, but their level of

'He only got out because the mental hospital he was in closed down. He was locked up with people who could not communicate with him. Tragically, this kind of thing is still happening'

Sue Wilding, of the charity, Sign

'I'm an old man now and I've left all that behind. The past is closed and finished as far as I'm concerned'

Leslie Brown

contact with psychiatric services was much lower. Steve Powell, Sign's chief executive, said: "Deaf people with mental illness have a double barrier to breach. They are far more likely than hearing people to suffer mental health problems, yet find it difficult to gain access to services."

"This situation cannot be allowed to continue. We want health and social services to tackle these issues as a matter of urgency."

Mr Brown's surname has been changed at the request of his relatives.

'Cleansing' of Kosovo accelerates

Aid workers and officials witness new aggression by Serb forces reminiscent of Bosnian offensive

Peter Beaumont in the Drenica enclave

A MASSIVE campaign of ethnic cleansing of Kosovan Albanians by Serb forces is underway, with aid workers, Western officials and journalists testifying yesterday to widespread destruction of villages, the shelling of civilian centres and the burning of crops and houses by police and special forces.

The similarities to the Bosnian campaign are striking. But this is ethnic cleansing with a new twist, driven by the Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic's caution as to how far he can go before the watching world intervenes.

This time he is using terror, rather than large-scale killing, to stampede civilians from their homes. Serb forces are indiscriminately shelling towns and villages, then occupying them as residents flee.

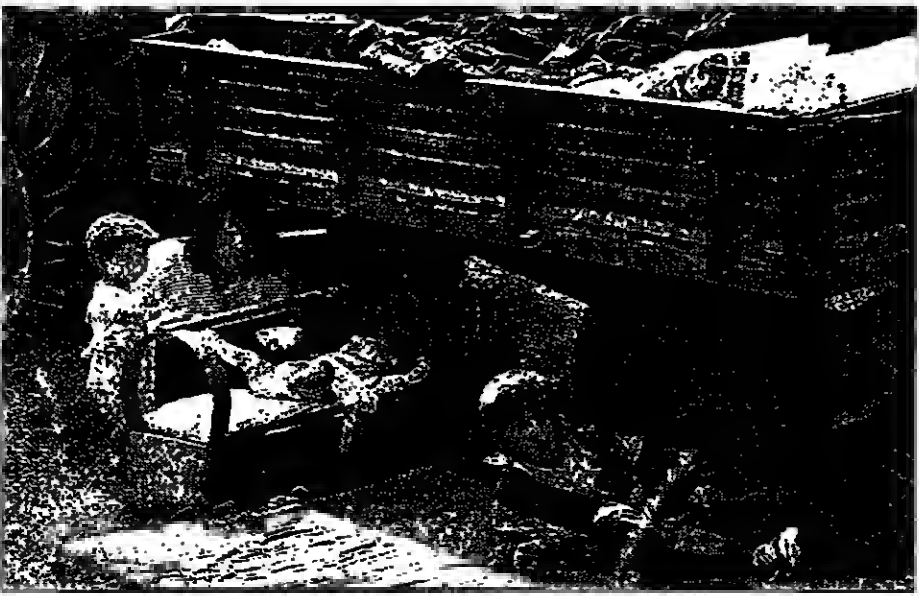
Strongholds of the separat-

ist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) have been sealed off by the Yugoslav National Army and Serb police. The troops aim to stop food reaching them. In the Drenica enclave, refugees driven from their villages are being pushed from pillar to post as they try to find sanctuary from Serb tanks, artillery and rockets.

They also described columns of refugees riding tractor carts passing each other on narrow mountain tracks in their desperate efforts to find safety.

In the Drenica villages yesterday, heavy fighting continued. The region resounded to the rumble of artillery and machine-gun fire. Refugees pouring over the mountains described how they had been driven from their homes 10 days ago by Serb police, special forces and Yugoslav army soldiers.

In one battered car crowded with possessions, Ferat Kenjaki, aged 45, and his cousin Nezir Cuni, aged 65,



Ethnic Albanian refugees hide from Serb guns in central Kosovo. PHOTOGRAPH: ATILIA KISER-NEKES

from the village of Lecina Citok, said their homes and crops had been torched.

"We fled when the soldiers came," Mr Kenjaki said. "But we watched from nearby as they burnt our houses. The civilians were fleeing but

they still fired on them." Their ordeal was not over. After taking refuge for two days in a primary school at Likovc, they were driven out after it, too, came under fire.

Western military analysts who have visited the region

say the Serb operation aims to clear pro-KLA villages from vast swaths of land. The Serbs want to create a "soft corridor" between areas of heavy fighting, to encourage ethnic Albanians to cross the borders into Albania and Montenegro.

One source said yesterday: "They seem determined to clear out not only KLA but everyone who supports it. They want to create a wasteland out of KLA territory."

The efforts to push out civilians with the fighters have come in the third week of the offensive, which has seen the retaking of the towns of Drnovac and Malisevo.

"The Serbs are not choosing to attack military targets. They are attacking everywhere. We are in a state of war," said Sabir Kadriu, chairman of the local human rights organisation in Drenica.

"The Serbs are using everything they have got against us. We are urging the humanitarian organisations to do everything they can to help us. Why is Europe shutting its eyes and not seeing the tragedy that is taking place?"

"They have given the green light to everything the Serbs are doing. That you are witnessing this tragedy at the end of the 20th century in the centre of Europe is absurd. But we will not give up. We have nowhere else to go. We are on our land and in our homes. It is the Serbs who have come shelling."

Heroin epidemic threatens young

continued from page 1

"With 80 per cent of area returns fairly confidently identifying new outbreaks within their communities and providing such a consistent picture and profile of new users, it is, unfortunately, reasonable to suggest that we are facing a second heroin epidemic."

"These outbreaks are not currently occurring in the old heroin areas, such as north-west England and London, nor in many rural areas but they are colonising in most regions of England, particularly north-east England, Yorkshire, West Midlands, Avon and south-west England."

"However heroin use is now occurring in completely new areas with no heroin history and the spread pattern suggests many communities will see its arrival during this year and next. Young people in these areas initially have only limited understanding of heroin's potency and dependency potential."

This new epidemic is being driven by major imports of cheap heroin from south-west

Asia brought via the Balkans and across Europe into Britain. A fall in price, strong availability and high purity all indicate a sustained supply route.

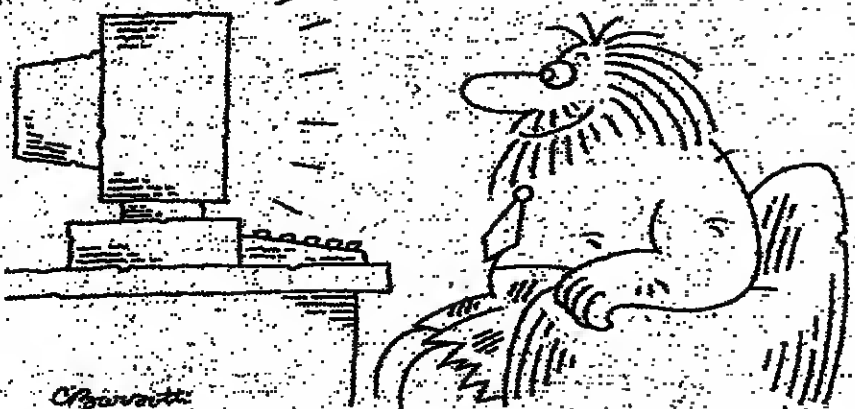
The authors say although the Government is committed to a major investment in drug services, there is a dearth of services for young heroin users such as needle exchanges, harm reduction and detoxification units, and the prescribing of the heroin substitute, methadone.

Home Office Minister George Howarth said the findings were alarming. "This report offers worrying evidence that heroin misuse is spreading in towns where traditionally there has not been a major heroin history."

"The findings are therefore very significant for agencies like Drug Action Teams which develop local drugs strategies and are best placed to identify the problem."

Home Office Police Research Group, New Heroin Outbreaks Amongst Young People in England and Wales, order by fax 0171 273 4001

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around the world can view pictures of the rooms and see the menus available. They can even make reservations at the hotel using e-mail. And with over 3,000 visits to their web site a month, The George Hotel is reaping the rewards. But setting up your own web site does not need to be expensive. It can cost as little as £95.

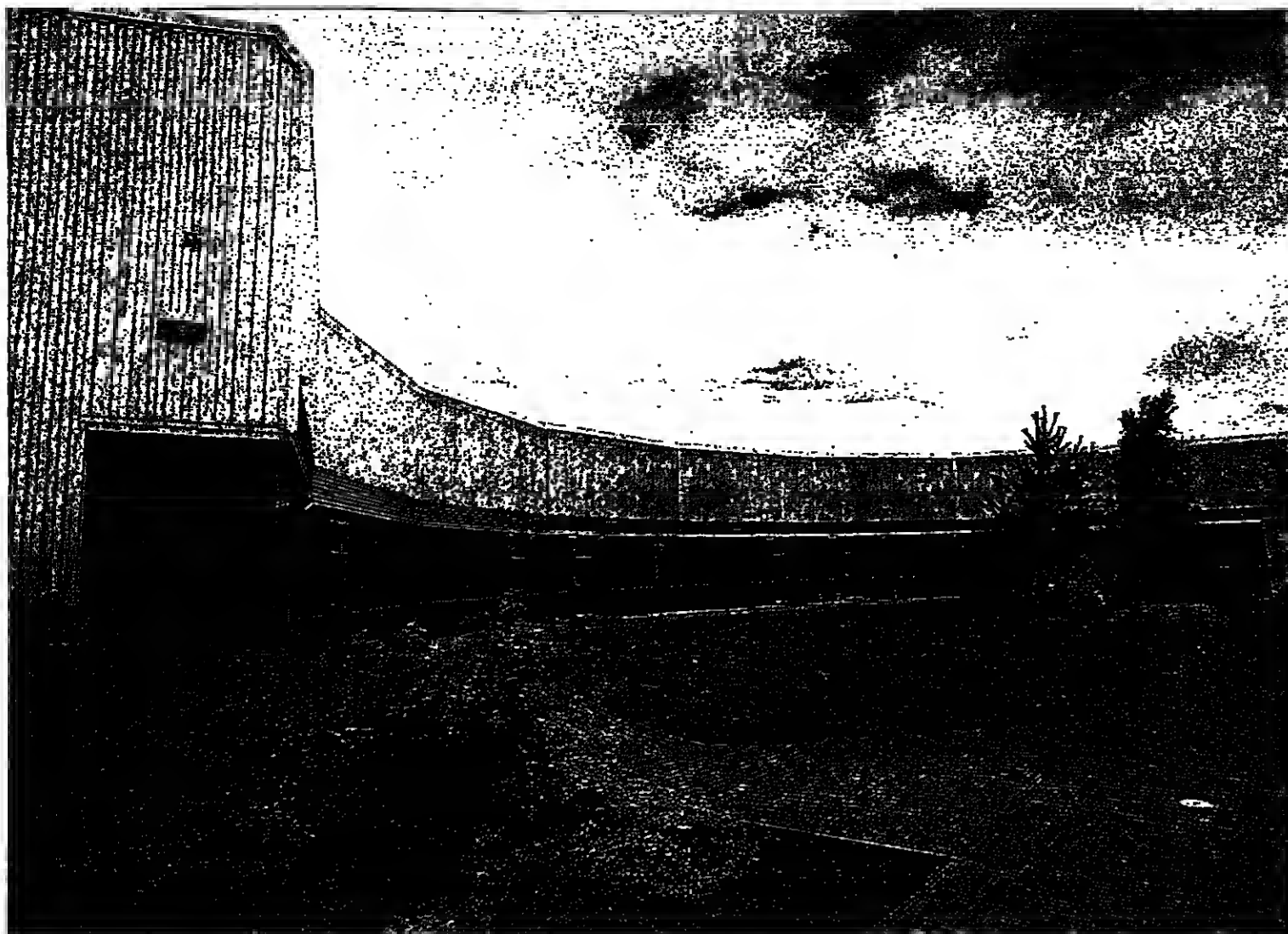
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At least 20 students and unemployed men in Scotland have been recruited by a clinic as 'replacements' for rats. John Vidal reports

More signed up for pesticide tests



Inveresk Research (left) a private company close to Heriot Watt university, in Edinburgh, where it draws student volunteers for testing pesticides. Jeff Rooker (below) believed the tests broke no laws or guidelines but promised to investigate

It also emerged that the Government pays people to take small doses of organo-phosphates. But the tests 'were not designed to see how far humans could go before they became ill'

AT LEAST 20 more students and unemployed men in Scotland have been recruited by a clinic as 'replacements' for rats. John Vidal reports

es's own clinic where they will be given doses of the organo-phosphate insecticide Azinphos-methyl to test their tolerance to the poison.

Azinphos-methyl, classified in the United States as toxic class one, is allowed to be applied only by licensed operators, and all products containing it must be labelled both "danger" and "poison". It is not licensed for agricultural use in Britain, the Ministry of Agriculture's Pesticides Safety Directorate says.

The human tests will be conducted "to determine a dose at which no side effects are observed", says a letter from Inveresk to the Scottish volunteers. It is not known what level dosage is being used, since the information is confidential.

But US research done on rats shows the pesticide works as a stomach poison and even very small doses in humans can lead to symptoms like heavy sweating, stomach pain, dizziness of vision, muscle cramps, vomiting and diarrhoea.

The long-term effects are unknown, said Elizabeth Sigmund of the OP Information Network, a campaigning group funded by the Rowntree Trust. "Any dose of an organo-phosphate is dangerous. No one knows their long-term effects on humans."

Last week the Guardian reported that a US chemical company had used the Medical Laboratory in Manchester to test other pesticides on students. According to documents obtained from the US

Environmental Protection Agency, some reported nausea and nosebleeds. In other tests, carried out for the French chemical company Rhone Poulenc by Inveresk, volunteers reported profuse sweating and lightheadedness.

It also emerged yesterday that the Government regularly pays human volunteers to take extremely low doses of organo-phosphates. But a spokesman for the Health and Safety Executive said the tests, done on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, would be "way below anything that could be harmful and not designed to see how far humans could go before they became ill. That would be totally unacceptable."

Farmworker discovered the children in car death tragedy



Lucy, Hollie and Thomas Carter

Weaver Hill, which, with its panoramic views, is popular with walkers.

Personal items, including a briefcase, handwritten notes, family photographs and financial documents, were found in the boot of the car.

Detectives said the children's 32-year-old mother, Teresa, who returned home on Sunday after leaving her family for her job in a dry cleaner's shop in Stafford on Saturday morning, was distraught.

Last night a neighbour, Bernard Williams, aged 77, said: "Teresa moved out quite a few months ago and only returned within the last few weeks or so. I know that Steve gave up his job so he could look after the kids at home."

"They were such sweet kids. They seemed to be getting along fine and no one could have had any idea something like this would happen."

Another neighbour, Mary Copstan, aged 60, said: "Steven was a marvellous father. Despite everything, he seemed happy. I last saw the kids at about 5.30pm on Saturday. They were their usual cheery selves and were playing on the green."

Detective Superintendent Jeff Virgo, who is leading the investigation, said officers were investigating whether domestic strife played any part in the tragedy.

David Ward

theme park. Detectives said he raised the alarm and a police officer then found the body of the children's father hanging from a nylon tow rope slung over a branch of a tree in a copse 100 yards from the car.

The dead man was last night named as Steven Carter, aged 36, and police identified the three children as Lucy, aged seven, Thomas, four, and Hollie, three.

The family lived in the village of Kingstone, near Uttoxeter and about 10 miles from

There is a litany of playful insults to describe Scotland's capital, most of which appear in the current edition of British Airways' inflight magazine, Highlife.

The private has been thrown out of the 310-year-old Green Howards after random tests, carried out in the past 18 months, proved positive.

Compulsory testing was introduced three years ago to weed out abusers.

The Green Howards' regimental secretary, Colonel Neil Macintosh, said: "Drugs could affect a soldier's judgment at a crucial moment. There can be no leniency with anyone who abuses drugs."

A spokesman for the North Yorkshire-based regiment said the expulsions were a cumulative figure of drugs tests carried out over the last 18 months and none of the drugs involved were Class A.

Church faces row over gay sex

Madeline Bunting
Religious Affairs Editor

THE Lambeth Conference faces controversy over homosexuality and euthanasia as it begins a final week of debating 30 resolutions drawn up in private discussions.

An alliance of bishops from developing countries, particularly Africa, and conservative evangelicals from the developed world, have produced six resolutions condemning homosexuality.

The language used — homosexual — is called on to repent and homosexuality is described as in need of "conversion" — will increase the liberal wing of the Anglican Church particularly in the UK, North America, Australia and New Zealand where there are significant numbers of ordained active homosexuals.

The resolutions, which also include one calling for peace and reconciliation in Rwanda, Sudan and Northern Uganda, reflect the power shift towards Africa in the global Anglican Communion which represents 70 million Christians.

The 736 bishops of the Anglican Communion meeting in Canterbury have produced more than 100 resolutions ranging from a call for the end of nuclear weapons and landmines to condemning violence against women and children and recognition of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

But it is the resolutions on homosexuality which are likely to dominate the end of the conference which is held once a decade.

"Ordained ministers must set a wholesome and credible example. Those persons who practise homosexuality and live in promiscuity, as well as

those bishops who knowingly ordain them or encourage them to do so, are in direct opposition to the teaching of Scripture and the Church. We call on them to repent," says one resolution from a regional meeting of bishops from Central and Eastern Africa.

The resolution on euthanasia will also disappoint liberals who have sought a more flexible position for the Church.

City councillor Susan Dalgaty was particularly worked up by Mr Renton's

opinions. "He has not only insulted Edinburgh, he has insulted every Scottish person and the millions of people who come to Edinburgh every year. He is a small-minded, bitter and twisted little man."

Mr Renton is also cynical about the city's view of the festival. Edinburgh, says Mr Renton, is none too happy with the "vulgarity" of the festival. "Even the taxi drivers, their pockets stuffed with foreigners' money, mean and curse the festival for the chaos and traffic jams it brings."

A spokeswoman for the festival said she did not want to spoil Mr Renton's fun, "but it is a fact that the people of Edinburgh do support the festival."

Highlife's editor, Mark Jones, said he thought Edinburgh would not be offended by the ribbing. "It's a bit of fun really."

Mr Renton was not available for comment. He is on a tour of Scottish islands.

BA's jibes leave Edinburgh cold

Gerard Seanan

A PART from the bustling splendour of the Royal Mile and the tasteful hush of the Georgian New Town, Edinburgh rarely enjoyed the best of reputations.

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Regiment fires 30 drug users

Malen Carter

ONE of Britain's oldest and most prestigious army regiments has sacked 30 soldiers after they failed drugs tests.

The privates have been thrown out of the 310-year-old Green Howards after random tests, carried out in the past 18 months, proved positive.

Field attack on 'cancer' of spin doctors

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

FRANK Field yesterday launched the latest salvo in his post-resignation fightback with an assault on spin doctors, whose activities he called a cancer at the heart of the Government.

After a weekend in which he came under fierce attack, some of it via unrecorded but vicious press briefings, the former welfare reform minister blamed "a medley of spin doctors" for his treatment.

His comments, the latest episode in a saga running since Tony Blair's Cabinet reshuffle last week, came just as Downing Street sought to defuse the situation by insisting the Government was "not engaged in a war of words" with Mr Field.

The former minister, who yesterday confirmed that he had resigned after Mr Blair had denied him the job he wanted as social security secretary, has already publicly blamed his former boss, Harriet Harman, and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, for allegedly blocking his ideas on welfare reform.

The counter-attack came in the form of government statements signalling a move to practical action on reform, a scarcely coded dig at Mr Field's "over-theoretical approach", and of anonymous briefings handing the former minister "a failed joke" and his ideas as "paltry and unpublishable".

Yesterday, Downing Street was privately irritated that Mr Field had once again popped up and grabbed headlines, this time with an interview on Radio 2's Jimmy Young show.

It was "unbelievably good news" that one of the first jobs for the new cabinet "enforcer", Jack Cunningham, was "to sort out the spin doctors".

He said: "Sadly, this whole episode shows the real need for that."

"In the long run, you can't not run a government like

this. It's a cancer that will eat away at the heart of our very existence and undermine the way ministers behave."

He added: "I have no dispute with the Prime Minister. Clearly, I have some sort of dispute with the spin doctors, but I hope they will be put in order quite shortly."

Despite his attacks on Ms Harman and Mr Brown for obstructing his attempts to "think the unthinkable", Mr Field has sought to avoid levelling the same charges at Mr Blair.

Yesterday, he insisted that the Prime Minister shared his views on basic human nature, which lay at the heart of his welfare reform proposals.

Malcolm Wicks, Labour MP for Croydon North and a member of the Commons social security select committee, called for an end to the row over Mr Field's resignation after the weekend sniping.

"I think it's all getting very out of hand", he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

The Tory leader, William Hague, last night attempted to stake up the row, accusing government ministers of trying to "destroy his [Mr Field's] reputation".

He said: "Bickering and backstabbing have become the hallmark of this government. Frank Field is only the latest victim of this distinctly unpleasant and extraordinarily childish approach to government."

The shadow chancellor, Francis Maude, used a speech last night to the Social Market Foundation to accuse Labour of blowing the opportunity to make "historic changes" to the welfare state.

He said: "The about-turn that led to Frank Field's departure suggests that welfare might turn out to be Labour's Cuba — one quick skirmish at the Bay of Pigs and it was all over."

Downing Street will probably get its wish of a few days of calm over welfare, but Mr Field may yet reignite the row when he addresses the Social Market Foundation on Wednesday.



It's raining champagne... After 47 days, Richard Rodriguez makes the final circuit of his rollercoaster marathon at Blackpool yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

Coaster king rides 11,000 miles to nowhere

David Ward on the ups and downs of establishing a Big Dipper record

A LECTURER in communications at Miami university yesterday defied the gales and downpours of a summer day in Blackpool to claim the title of King of the Coasters.

Richard Rodriguez, aged 39, is now the holder of the world record for riding a roller coaster continuously, having passed a large chunk of his summer break on the Big Dipper, the 77-year-old wooden ride

at Blackpool's Pleasure Beach. He spent 1,013 hours and a bit (47 days and nights) going up and down the roller coaster, completing approximately 18,234 circuits and travelling about 11,362 miles without getting anywhere.

But at least he did not have to pay. At £2.10 a ride, he could have faced a bill of £237,000. And the rules allow for a five-minute comfort break every hour,

time that can be saved up to relish a shower or linger over a meal.

After busting through a celebratory banner to the accompaniment of a jazz band on his final circuit, Mr Rodriguez threatened to stay on for 2,000 hours next time — and then admitted he was only joking.

"I'm glad to be off the Big Dipper and back on stable ground. It's been a great adventure," he said. "The tough part of it has been the rain."

He passed the 1,000-hour mark in the early hours of yesterday and celebrated by shaking hands with the

lone dipper engineer on duty and ringing his mom in the US on his mobile.

Mr Rodriguez set his first coaster endurance record — a mere 103 hours — in 1977 and clocked up 549 hours on the Big Dipper in 1994. He returned this year to beat his own record and stay on for 600 hours before heading for an unbeatable retirement.

But two days after the king began his ride on June 18, Canadian challenger Norman St Pierre gave chase on Le Monstre in Montreal. "No surrender!" cried Mr Rodriguez, from the dipper's 70ft summit

with its fine views of the south pier, Blackpool Tower, and approaching rain clouds.

The challenger dropped out after a mere 670 hours, and the champion, who is a diabetic, resolved to go for the ton, smuggling into his nest of foam and a sleeping bag and disappearing beneath a tarpaulin at bedtime. He passed daylight hours reading V2 and the Guardian.

"You certainly can't get into heavy reading," he confided. "Talking to passengers is a great enjoyment — you meet people from all over the world."

He travelled every day in the centre of the three-car train, having plastered himself with factor 30 sun block. "It's a very smooth out and back ride," he added. "It's like an ocean swell — the cars just sail over the hills and it's not too lumpy. You get the most balanced ride in the centre. In the back, you would be whipped round; in the front, you are thrust round corners."

Having defied G-forces, Mr Rodriguez plans to make a sedate progress round Britain visiting friends before heading back to his campus.

Woman awake in op wins claim

Geoffrey Gibbs

A WOMAN who suffered a heart attack in a hospital operating theatre while lying awake during surgery could collect thousands of pounds in compensation from her local health authority after winning a medical negligence claim.

June Blacker, a 45-year-old mother of three, said doctors at the Prince Charles hospital in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, failed to notice the anaesthetic had not taken effect when she was taken into theatre for a sterilisation operation four years ago.

She was unable to raise the alarm because she had been given muscle-relaxing drugs. Fifteen minutes into the surgery she had a heart attack.

The Bro Tŷ Health Authority, which inherited the case following health service reorganisation, confirmed yesterday it had admitted liability for the incident. At the time the hospital was directly managed by the now defunct Mid Glamorgan Health Authority.

A health authority spokeswoman said she was unable

to discuss the case for reasons of patient confidentiality.

Mrs Blacker, from Adedare, Mid Glamorgan, said: "They gave me the anaesthetic before wheeling me to the theatre but I knew something was wrong because I was still awake."

"I tried to speak but I couldn't make a sound. Within a couple of minutes I felt an unbearable pain. I tried to wriggle and kick out to let them know I could feel everything but none of my muscles would move. I was totally helpless while the surgeon cut open my stomach."

Mrs Blacker said she could remember the alarms on a monitor suddenly sounding. "The anaesthetist started pumping my chest to get my heart working again... I thought I was going to die. The pain was unbearable but the worst part was lying there paralysed and not being able to do anything about it."

Mrs Blacker's solicitors said their client's claim was for financial compensation for personal injury. The Cardiff-based solicitors declined to speculate on the size of the compensation.

Shooting incident leaves postal worker dead

Janet Wilson

ONE postal worker was killed and another was in critical condition in hospital last night after a gunman opened fire at a residential address in Shropshire.

The incident happened after a team of three Royal Mail investigators called at a house in Ellesmere, at around 11am. It is understood the occupant, who is believed to be a Royal Mail worker, pulled out a gun and began shooting.

One of the postal officers was shot dead and another received serious injuries. The third, who was not injured, disarmed the gunman, who was arrested when armed police arrived minutes later after a call from a member of the public.

Insp Pete Jones, of Shropshire police, said: "Three employees of the Royal Mail were at the address and there was a shooting incident."

"One died at the scene, the second was injured, and the third managed to overpower the man with the gun. The gunman was arrested and taken to Shropshire police station for questioning."

The Royal Mail team was carrying out some sort of investigation — they were definitely not postmen."

A neighbour, Jesela Edwards, aged 19, said: "We heard a noise which sounded like firecrackers just before 11am. Two ambulances and three or four police cars arrived. Then we saw two people wrapped up in blankets being carried out of the house on stretchers by paramedics."

The injured man, believed to be in his 40s, was taken by air ambulance to Staffordshire royal infirmary with gunshot wounds to his neck and shoulder.

It is believed that the gunman, who will be questioned by police today, was a member of Oswestry Gun Club. Police said that a number of firearms had been seized at the address.

A spokesman for the Royal Mail said: "It is with great regret that Royal Mail confirms that an employee injured in a shooting incident at Ellesmere has died. The second employee has been taken to hospital with serious injuries."

The Royal Mail worker who died was 37 and his seriously injured colleague is 53. Both men are from Cheshire.



The scene of yesterday morning's shooting incident at Ellesmere, Shropshire

Spotlight on Gadafy plot claim

True or not, Shayler's allegation over Libya throws light on MI6's scope for action on foreign soil

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE former MI5 officer, who faces extradition from France over disclosures from his time in the intelligence service — claims that MI6 plotted to assassinate the Libyan leader, Colonel Gadafy. The Government has obtained a gagging injunction designed to prevent Shayler's allegations from seeing the light of day.

Whatever the truth of this particular allegation, what is clear is that MI6 — unlike the CIA — can lawfully kill people abroad. The 1994 Intelligence Services Act protects MI6 officers carrying out acts outside Britain which if committed here would be an offence.

Such acts would need the authorisation of the Foreign Secretary who has to be satisfied that the operation would be compatible with the functions of MI6. These functions include not only gathering intelligence about what foreign powers are up to, but performing any "other tasks relating to the actions or intentions of such persons".

British secret agents masterminded an operation which killed Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi gauleiter of Bohemia, in 1943. Documents recently released revealed that the wartime Special Operations Executive devised an elaborate scheme to assassinate Hitler.

The operation was sanctioned by Anthony Eden, then foreign secretary. The conspiracy was made between

Hitler and Nasser encouraged MI5 and MI6 to draw up schemes to kill the Egyptian leader during the Suez crisis. The former MI5 officer, Peter Wright, describes how scientists tested poison on sheep, with a view to using it against Nasser.

"What's all this nonsense about isolating Nasser or 'neutralising' him as you call it," Eden, then prime minister, told MI6. "I want him destroyed, can't you understand?" Shortly afterwards, Sir Dick White, the new head of MI6, issued a directive banning assassination.

After mounting evidence that the CIA was involved in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, prime minister of the newly-independent Congo, and had made several attempts to kill Castro — once planning to blow him up with an exploding cigar — President Reagan in 1981 signed Executive Order 12333.

"No person," it said, "employed by or acting on behalf of the United States govern-

ment shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination." The order was cited by Richard Cheney, then US defence secretary, when he sacked General Michael Dugan, head of the US Air Force, for saying before the 1991 Gulf war that American aircraft might try to "decapitate" Iraq's leadership by bombing Saddam Hussein and his mistress.

The order did not stop Reagan's officials from hatching plots to eliminate Gadafy, including the Thatcher-approved attack in 1988 by British-based US bombers on barracks where the Libyan leader was sleeping in a courtyard. His 15-month-old adopted daughter was killed and two of his sons injured.

It has also not stopped the CIA from trying to mount coups against Saddam by recruiting Kurds or disilluminated Iraqi officers. They have been spectacular failures, with disastrous consequences. A joint CIA-MI6 plot in 1986 to oust the Iraqi leader

with the help of the opposition Iraqi National Accord led to the deaths of many conspirators and the arrests of hundreds of others.

If there is any moral defence of assassination, it is that the elimination of a ruthless dictator is preferable to the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, and even soldiers.

But there are practical arguments against assassination, well put more than 20 years ago by Richard Helms, the former CIA director, in evidence to Senate investigations following the Watergate affair. You never know who is going to replace the victim, he said.

He added: "It is almost impossible in a democracy to keep anything like that secret... somebody would go to his congressman, his senator, he might go to a newspaperman, whatever the case may be, but it is just not a practical alternative, it seems to me, in our society." Except, perhaps, in Britain.

Fear of Spycatcher repeat

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

LABOUR MPs fear the Government may be sleepwalking towards a civil liberties confrontation over the former MI5 officer, David Shayler, that could turn into Spycatcher Two.

Whitehall gave the impression yesterday of being fully aware of the political consequences of pursuing Shayler, who faces extradition from France over disclosures from his time in the intelligence service.

But Labour backbenchers were less sanguine. They warned of the risk of turning Shayler into a cause célèbre comparable to Peter Wright, whose Spycatcher book Margaret Thatcher sought to ban.

They saw an added risk: accusations of hypocrisy. Many prominent Labour figures were active in the campaign to get the Spycatcher ban lifted, and

were now members of a government engaged on a similar gagging exercise.

Tam Dalyell, the veteran Labour civil rights campaigner and MP for Linlithgow, said yesterday: "I think they [the Government] are making the same mistake as over Peter Wright. There is a real problem developing between what Labour said in opposition and what we are doing now, and that is seeping through to the public."

Shayler, who was arrested on Saturday in Paris, has disclosed information both about botched MI6 operations against IRA bombers and, more seriously, an alleged MI6 attempt to assassinate the Libyan leader, Colonel Gadafy. The Government has had an injunction in place since last year to prevent publication.

A Home Office spokesman said yesterday the injunction was still in force. Several publications had disclosed some of Shayler's

allegations without any government action against them, but the Home Office spokesman threatened that they may yet have to answer for them. In the Mail on Sunday last August there had been breaches of the Official Secrets Act.

Downing Street defended the decision yesterday to seek to discipline Shayler. "It is a matter of principle and if you do not go down this route, it would set a precedent."

This view was reinforced by the Home Office spokesman, who said any public servant had a duty of confidentiality and Shayler had breached his. He added there had been a criminal offence and "that is not something that can be tolerated".

In opposition a number of Labour MPs criticised the Official Secrets Act, not least the draconian version produced by the Tory government in 1989. Tony Blair, among others, voted against it at the third reading.

Clinton urged to tell all in public

Gary Young in Washington

THE PRESSURE was growing on Bill Clinton last night to deliver a televised confession of the precise nature of his alleged sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, as the White House pursued its legal battle to prevent the president's closest confidant testifying to the grand jury.

White House officials said they would mount a new challenge against last month's decision by three appeal court judges to order Bruce Lindsey — the president's lawyer — to testify. The court rejected the administration's argument that Mr Lindsey's conversations with the president were protected by attorney-client privilege.

The court ruled that, as a government attorney, paid from public funds, Mr Lindsey did not enjoy the same privileges as a private lawyer. Presidential advisers plan to take their case straight to the supreme court.

Meanwhile, Democrats and Republicans stepped up their efforts to persuade Mr Clinton to bare his soul to the electorate and reveal in public what he plans to tell the grand jury in private when he testifies on August 17.

Mr Clinton's former aide, George Stephanopoulos, argued that the president's best hope lay in a televised mea culpa.

Writing in Newsweek magazine, he said: "The president needs to explain himself to the country. If he's shaded the truth, it's time to amend the record. If he's lied, he should tell all, apologise and hope for the best. If he doesn't step forward now, the rest of his term will be consumed by prosecutorial fallout and the risk that he will have little credibility with the public."

Mine rescuers admit worst

Kate Connolly in Lassing

RESCUERS were last night winding down efforts to find the 30 men trapped in an Austrian mine for 17 days, after doctors said there was only a theoretical chance that any of them were still alive.

On Sunday, cameras and microphones were lowered into a cavern in the mine where the men might have been sheltering. But they failed to reveal any sign of life.

A second attempt, with stronger lighting, in the early hours of yesterday morning was also unsuccessful.

A further sonar test will be carried out today, but few in the Alpine village of Lassing bore much hope.

Alfred Zechner, the rescue team's spokesman, said that there were two other places in the mine where the men could have taken refuge. But, after consulting doctors in the rescue team, he said: "It is very, very improbable that anyone is still alive."

Leonard Abraham, a drilling engineer with an Austrian company, said: "We have now searched the whole of the cavern and there is no hope anymore."

The men were trapped on July 17 by a landslide when they went down the tunnel mine to rescue Georg Hainzl, a colleague trapped by an earlier collapse. Mr Hainzl was rescued last weekend when knocking sounds were heard on the surface.

The wives and 18 children of the trapped miners were being prepared for the worst yesterday by priests and counsellors.

"We will not believe that the men are dead until they bring up the bodies," said Josef Phuzner, aged 63.

The retired miner from the nearby town of Liezen was waiting to hear news of his colleague of 20 years, Harald Zechner, aged 44, who has two children.

A nursery nurse, Ruth Ploeder, aged 39, has given up all hope of ever seeing her husband Helmut again. But her teenage daughter, Marlene, was convinced that her father was alive. "So that she can feel close to her dad, she goes around wearing his T-shirts," her mother said.

The White House chief of staff, Erskine Bowles, was also reported to be trying to arrange for Mr Clinton to ask the country's forgiveness. Mr Bowles's predecessor, Leon Panetta, warned that if Mr Clinton did not come clean quickly "this issue is going to dominate his presidency".

Senior Republicans, including Orrin Hatch, the chairman of the Senate judiciary committee, have said that Mr Clinton would not necessarily have to resign if he admitted a sexual relationship with the former White House intern. The judiciary committee will ultimately decide whether to lodge articles of impeachment with Congress.

The advice came as new footage emerged of Mr Clinton paying unusually close attention to Ms Lewinsky at a fundraising event in Washington in October 1996.

With Ms Lewinsky expected to appear before the grand jury some time this week, and the preliminary results of DNA tests on her dress imminent, Mr Clinton's options for emerging from the scandal with any credibility intact are narrowing.

The grand jury hearing is into whether Mr Clinton tried to cover up a relationship with Ms Lewinsky, or tried to induce her to do so. It is part of an investigation by Kenneth Starr, the independent prosecutor, into Mr Clinton's conduct of business and other dealings.

The latest polls suggest that, whatever legal difficulties Mr Clinton may find himself in if he confesses to lying under oath, Americans already believe he is guilty and are prepared to forgive him.

A Time/CNN poll shows that 60 per cent believe that he did have an affair with Ms Lewinsky and 61 per cent say that if he admits it Mr Starr should end his investigation.

The Graduate School of Management reported that it earned the city \$27 million, and had a bigger economic impact than any comparable event, including the Australian Tennis Open and the Australian Formula One Grand Prix.

Last night, six months after the annual festival, the Albury Hotel was packed for the grand final of an all-male glamour competition. The duty manager, John Bell, said the influx of Australian and overseas visitors during Mardi Gras helped keep many local companies afloat all year.

A lot of businesses on the Oxford Street rely heavily on those four weeks, and even the straight businesses on the street make most of their money then as well," he said.

More than 5,000 international visitors, many from the United States and Britain, spent more than £120 a day during a typical three-week stay. Mainstream tourists were more frugal.

The figures are being used by the festival organisers to demand equal rights for same-sex couples. Given the significance of Mardi Gras to the national economy, it is time equal rights for gay and lesbian people were delivered," Bev Lange, president of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, said.

Even the chief executive of the ultra-straight New South Wales chamber of commerce, Katie Lahey, said the festival was "not only a significant part of the cultural and social face of Sydney but 'an important part of the economy'".

A tourist industry spokesman said the Mardi Gras also helped promote Australia as a tolerant place to visit, despite the publicity given to the anti-immigration One Nation Party.

Without predators, the model beaver becomes a destroyer

Tragedy forces hard choices on families of girls switched at birth three years ago

Mark Tran in New York

THE case of two Virginia girls whose identities were confused at birth has taken a tragic twist with the discovery that one of the two couples raising the three-year-olds died in a car crash.

Kevin Chittum and Whitney Rogers were among seven people killed in the accident last month. They were raising Rebecca Grace, without knowing that she was not their biological daughter.

Rebecca is now being taken care of by grandparents and step-grandparents who are locked in a bitter custody battle for her. The news that Rebecca is not their "real" grandchild can only further complicate this tragically complex story.

The mistake was exposed when Rebecca's biological mother, Paula Johnson of Ruckersville, had a DNA test conducted during a dispute over child support. She discovered that the daughter she had raised — Callie — was not the girl she gave birth to.

She went public with the test and the University of Virginia Medical Centre in Charlottesville, where the girls were born in June 1995, tracked down Rebecca.

It conducted DNA tests on her which confirmed that she was Ms Johnson's real daughter.

Ms Johnson wept at the weekend when told by USA Today that Rebecca had been found in the small mountain town of Boona Vista, 50 miles from Ruckersville.

Ms Johnson said she did not want to take Rebecca away from the family she had known. "This girl has already experienced so much tragedy in her three years," she said. "I just wanted to know her name, to see what she looked like and to know my daughter."

She also said she would not give up Callie, adding that she hoped it would be possible for both families to be part of the two girls' lives.

Rebecca is already at the centre of a custody battle, being taken care of in four-month stints by Kevin's parents, and Whitney's father and mother, who are divorced.



Paula Johnson with Callie, the child she has raised as her own for three years after a mix-up at hospital. The mistake was only revealed when she had a DNA test performed

Kevin's parents plan to ask full custody of Rebecca and Kevin and Whitney's other child, Lindsey, aged one.

Some members of Kevin's family also want custody of Callie, although others do not. Linda Camden, Kevin's cousin, hopes for a gradual swap so the two girls can adjust.

"Callie looks just like Kevin's little baby," Ms Camden said. "And if only this

lady could see Rebecca ... She looks just like her."

From the moment Rebecca came home from hospital, her family had said she did not look like her parents or anyone else on either side of the family.

"Even her mother used to say, 'It's weird. Rebecca doesn't really look or act like one of us,'" said Mary Watts, Kevin's aunt.

The two three-year-olds live about two hours' drive

from each other. The University of Virginia Medical Centre last week confirmed that the two babies were switched at birth, saying it could not have been accidental because of the hospital's stringent security precautions. A criminal investigation is under way.

The case is a labyrinth of legal problems as well as enormous emotional difficulties for all involved. Specialists say there is no

easy solution, especially as the case is tragically complicated by the death of the people Rebecca had always known as her parents. An exchange could only add to that trauma.

When told that her parents had gone to heaven, Rebecca said: "No they haven't, they've just gone to the beach."

Evel Gottlieb, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles, said a compromise might be to leave each child in place while extending the family unit by adding the biological relatives to it.

"I would try to mobilise everyone in a positive way around the issue of what is most helpful for this child, rather than focusing on what is someone else's legal rights," he said.

Kevin Chittum was driving to a country fair on the July 4 holiday weekend when his car slid on a patch of water and smashed head-on into a lorry travelling in the opposite direction.

He was killed along with his fiancée, Whitney Rogers, aged 19, two relatives and two friends. The lorry driver also died.

Spanish row puts wetlands at risk again

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

THOUSANDS of migrating birds and marine life are likely to be destroyed in a second toxic flood in southern Spain, because local and national politicians cannot agree on how to spend the European Union's \$50 million rescue fund.

In the 100 days since a lethal mixture of 176 million cubic feet of toxic waste spilled from a mine, engulfing the Doñana wetlands, the clean up operation has been delayed because the right-wing central government and the socialist in Andalusia have each come up with different rescue plans and rejected each other's.

As a result no plan has reached Brussels and the money cannot now be released until next month, when autumn rains are expected to cause a second flood, poisoning hundreds of thousands of migrating birds.

The shellfish industry in the river estuary and along the coast is also expected to be destroyed as metals such as lead, zinc and arsenic, with toxicity levels 1,000 times more than normal, are washed downstream.

The wetlands are the most important in Europe and many bird species from Britain rely on the Doñana national park for their survival, including redshank, dunlin, lapwing, black tailed godwit, widgeon and grey lag goose.

A dam holding back the toxic sludge burst on April 25, sending a 45ft-high wall of mud 30 miles down the Guadalquivir river towards the wetlands, half of which are a national park controlled by Madrid and the rest by the region.

The local government built a series of dams along the river to hold back the sludge from the main part of the park. Some 20 per cent was removed by mechanical diggers, but a team of 1,600 workers to shift the rest never materialised.

The national government wants to build a 25-mile-long,

6ft-high earth wall to prevent the flood waters from the river spilling into the unprotected areas of the park. This would flush the toxic metals into the Guadalquivir river, flooding the rice paddies along the estuary sides and wiping out the clam and prawn fishing industry at Sanlúcar de Barrameda. This idea has enraged the regional government.

Yesterday, BirdLife International, the Spanish bird protection organisation SEO, and the RSPB blamed "squabbling between left and right politicians" for the delays.

Dr Debbie Pain, of the RSPB, said: "The Spanish government's Higher Scientific Council predicted on Friday that there was a 90 per cent chance of another disaster because it was too late now to stop the floods washing the toxic mud over a much wider area."

In some areas hit by the sludge, plants on which geese and waders feed have started to grow again.

But the club rubbish and reed mace plants showed 100 times the normal level of arsenic and zinc — a toxic risk for the birds.

Laurence Rose, head of the European department of the RSPB, said: "This was a race against time to try and avert a second disaster that we seem to have lost already."

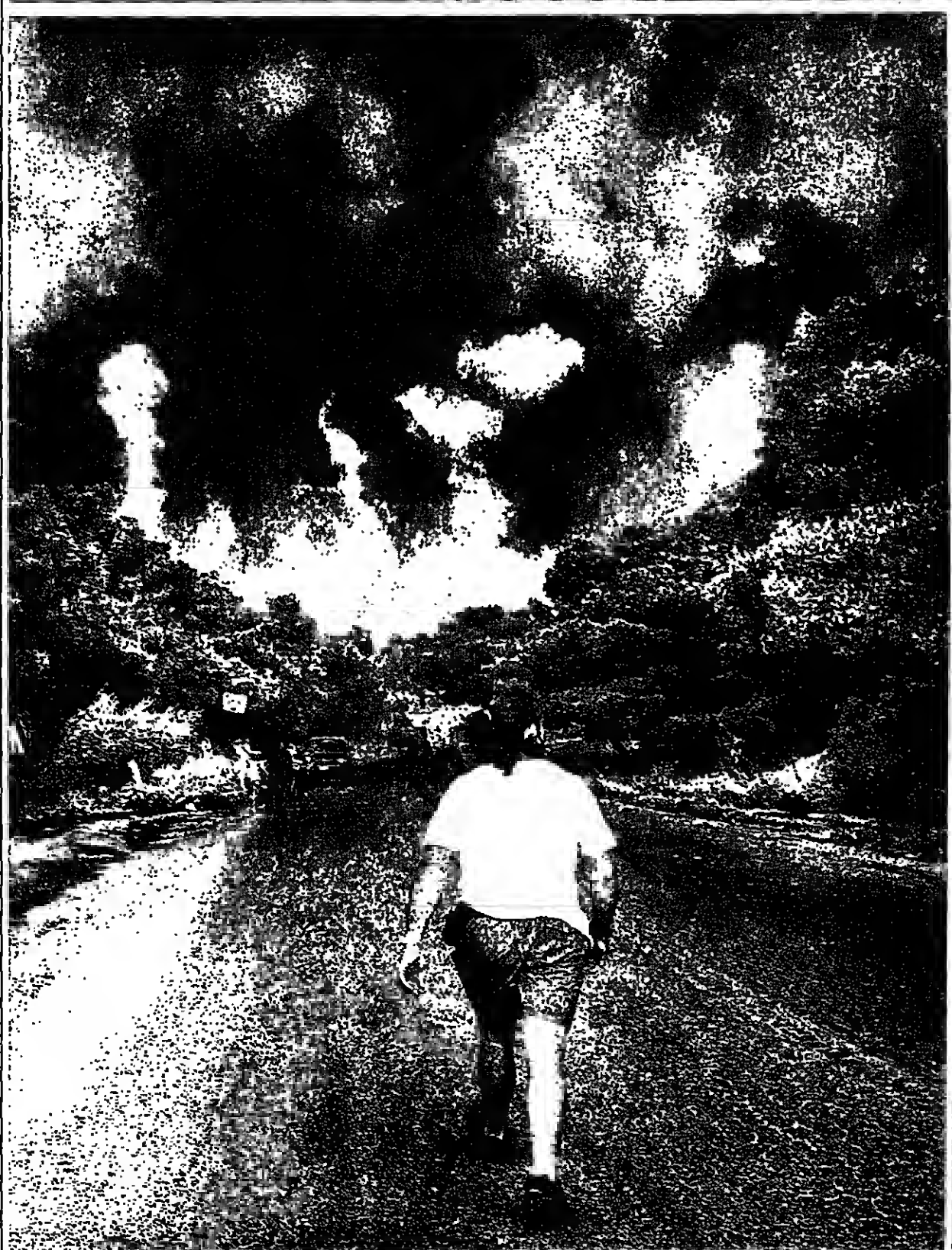
"We are now reduced to firing guns or other bird-scaring devices to try and force the endangered birds, like storks, eagles and waders, from feeding in the most contaminated areas. In such a vast area — about 500,000 acres — it seems hopeless, but we must do our best."

thousands more beaver on the Chilean side.

Having reached saturation on the main island of the archipelago, beaver have swum to several outlying islands, and that makes biologists worry about an eventual continental invasion. Several government scientists are pressing for an eradication campaign.

Government environmentalists have trained scores of local hunters in modern trapping techniques and the foreign ministry is pressing the European Union to open its market to Argentine beaver.

Other countries would stand in the way of Argentina's campaign to halt the beaver scourge. "It's quite a stupid thing," said Victoria Lichtschel, director of forest fauna and flora in Argentina's natural resources secretariat. "This is not a species that needs to be protected," she said. — New York Times



A huge forest fire burns out of control on the outskirts of Athens yesterday. It engulfed several homes in holiday communities on Mount Pendeli and was threatening a monastery and hospital. The blaze, which started on Sunday night and has razed several thousand acres of pine forest, is being treated as arson

Over-eager beavers ravage Argentine island

The mainland fears a rodent invasion from Tierra del Fuego, writes Clifford Krauss

IN 1946, someone in General Juan Peron's navy came up with the idea of colonising Tierra del Fuego with 25 pairs of beaver from Canada, to promote the local fur industry. Half a century later, this snowy archipelago on the tip of South America is being overrun.

These beavers are nothing if not eager. They have cut down hundreds of acres of forest to build dams hundreds of feet long. Their architectural wonders of branches and mud make fine tourist attractions, but they are also recruiting streams and rivers, interrupting trout migrations to traditional spawning grounds. And they have created hundreds of artificial lakes that are flooding still more forest land and roads, threatening the livelihoods of

island cattlemen and farmers. But what scientists fear most is the possibility that Tierra del Fuego's beavers may one day manage to swim — or be smuggled — across the Magellan Strait and invade the South American mainland. "They could take over the Andean forests," a government biologist, Alejandro González, warned. "They must be eliminated."

Among the world's rodents, beaver have the best reputation. They are industrious, furry and among the very few species that are monogamous. But in Tierra del Fuego, the word beaver is increasingly synonymous with destroyer.

"For us, the beaver isn't just some cute little creature," said Juan Manuel Harrington, a strawberry farmer. "He's a plague whose dikes flood our forests and erode our land."

Juan Esteban Rivero, a hunter, said: "If I don't hunt down these beaver, the widow next door will lose her sheep and cattle from the floods created by these animals."

The Peron government had many half-baked ideas. But its beaver policy seemed perfectly sensible in the 1940s, as fashion-conscious women around the world draped themselves in pelts without thinking twice about cruelty to the animals involved.

It overlooked one simple fact, however: Tierra del Fuego does not have any of the predators, such as wolves and bear, that flourish in the beaver's original home in the Canadian wilds. Consequently, beavers have thrived in like nowhere else on earth.

Marta Lizarralde, a researcher at the Austral Centre for Scientific Studies in Ushuaia, estimates that the original beaver population of 50 expanded to 2,500 by 1966, then to 30,000 by 1986, reaching about 50,000 on the main island of Tierra del Fuego today.

But her figures are for only the Argentine side of the island — there are tens of

thousands more beaver on the Chilean side.

Having reached saturation on the main island of the archipelago, beaver have swum to several outlying islands, and that makes biologists worry about an eventual continental invasion. Several government scientists are pressing for an eradication campaign.

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Taliban fighters with a Russian-made tank wait north of Kabul yesterday for the order to assault their opponents' last main northern stronghold

PHOTOGRAPH: ZAHEDUDDIN ABDULLAH

Taliban near total victory

Richard Galpin
in Islamabad

TROOPS of the Taliban militia in Afghanistan closed in on the opposition stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif yesterday after a string of military victories in the north of the country that has brought them tantalisingly close to their goal of controlling the whole of Afghanistan.

The Taliban-run Sharif radio said their forces were "on the threshold of [total] victory" after seizing Sheberghan on Sunday, a strategic military town for the opposition, and then marching towards Mazar-i-Sharif — the headquarters of the opposition Northern Alliance and the only city in Afghanistan not under the control of the purist Islamic Taliban.

Independent sources in Mazar-i-Sharif said so far there had not been fighting nearby, but described the atmosphere as extremely tense, with civilians packing their belongings

and leaving. A handful of foreign aid workers were waiting to be evacuated.

This latest Taliban offensive began on Saturday with heavy fighting around Sheberghan, the base for one of the most important leaders of the opposition alliance, General Abdul Rashid Dostam. By Sunday the town had fallen to the Taliban, who said they captured huge quantities of arms and ammunition from retreating opposition forces.

But between 20 and 30 opposition aircraft were set on fire and destroyed before the Taliban could take them. Taliban sources said opposition troops had scattered and had not been able to establish any defensive positions on the road to Mazar-i-Sharif, which is about 75 miles east of Sheberghan. An opposition spokesman said Gen Dostam had fled north to a town close to the border with Uzbekistan, where he is currently trying to reorganise his forces.

As in many of its previous military successes, the Taliban have been able to ad-



vance quickly thanks to the detection of local opposition commanders who, sensing the tide of events, have switched allegiance. Taliban leaders say they have not encountered much resistance so far,

and that four districts close to Mazar-i-Sharif are now effectively under their control, after several local warlords hoisted white flags and joined their ranks.

But Mazar-i-Sharif is also

likely to come under attack simultaneously from the opposite side — from the east. Taliban forces are reported to have broken out of their isolated pocket in Kunduz province and are now moving along the road to the city. Unconfirmed reports say they are about 35 miles away.

The disparate parties of the opposition alliance, say they are preparing to defend Mazar-i-Sharif against the expected Taliban onslaught. But the alliance is weak and divided. Although the city's fall is by no means a foregone conclusion, it is hard to see how the opposition can hold out against a sustained attack.

Unlike the Taliban's brief capture of Mazar-i-Sharif last year, when they were forced to retreat after intense fighting, they are much stronger this time, with supply lines and defensive positions secured.

If Mazar-i-Sharif does fall then the Taliban will have finally achieved their goal of effectively taking control of the whole of Afghanistan, two years after they marched in triumph into the capital, Ka-

bul. There would just be a few isolated pockets of resistance led by commanders such as Ahmed Shah Masoud in the Panjshir valley, north of Kabul, and the Shi'ite faction Hizbe Wahadat, in central Afghanistan.

The international community would then have to come to terms with recognising the ultra-orthodox Islamic militia as the legitimate government of the country, despite their increasingly repressive policies, particularly towards women — responsible in part for the withdrawal of foreign aid agencies from Kabul last month and the suspension of all aid from the European Commission to the city.

Concerned about the international reaction, Taliban Radio has already made broadcasts aimed at reassuring neighbouring central Asian countries that the movement has no desire to expand its rule outside Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is particularly concerned about an influx of refugees and the spread of instability into the region.

Afghans linked to new killings near Kashmir

M. R. Narayan Swamy
in New Delhi

MUSLIM separatist guerrillas massacred 37 Hindu labourers in two attacks early yesterday morning in a northern Indian state near the disputed region of Kashmir, officials and local news agencies said.

In five days of intense artillery fire between Indian and Pakistan troops across the Kashmir border, more than 80 people have been killed.

India and Pakistan dispute ownership of Kashmir, the Himalayan state which has triggered two of the three wars since the country gained independence from Britain in 1947.

The Indian prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, told parliament that he was ready to resume stalled peace talks with Pakistan, but said Islamabad must first stop arming Kashmiri militants. Pakistan says it provides only moral and diplomatic support.

In the first attack in Himalach Pradesh state, a gang of armed militants entered the remote hill town of Chamba. A group of road workers were woken and, after it was confirmed that they were Hindus, India's dominant religious community, they were tied up and shot, a local police official said. Three of the labourers survived but are seriously injured.

Hours later 11 more road workers were shot dead in the neighbouring village of Sattrudi.

The scenic state of Himachal Pradesh, which is popular with tourists, is ruled by Hindu nationalists, who also govern India.

Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, is ruled by a Muslim party allied to the nationalists. A separatist campaign there has claimed more

than 20,000 lives since 1989. Police and Indian troops started searching the region around Chamba and moved into Kashmir in an attempt to track down the killers. It is believed they could be Islamic mercenaries, many of whom are Afghan, including veterans of the war against the Soviet Union.

They have made their base in virtually inaccessible hills in Kashmir, from which they launch their attacks on Hindu civilians and the Indian security forces.

Mr Vajpayee denounced the massacres. "The killings are outrageous," he told parliament. "I express deep grief and shock at the killing of a large number of innocent people."

More than 300,000 Hindus have fled Kashmir since 1989, some settling in the Hindu-dominated Jammu region of Kashmir, increasing Hindu-Muslim tensions. On Saturday, Muslim guerrillas killed four Hindus in a similar pre-dawn attack in Kashmir. The killers, who were dressed in Indian army uniforms, were described by a survivor as Pathans — a warrior tribe from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The killers, who were dressed in Indian army uniforms, were described by a survivor as Pathans — a warrior tribe from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Four days earlier, Muslim militants gunned down 16 Hindus in Kashmir's Doda district.

Meanwhile, Mr Vajpayee and Pakistan's prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, stepped up the war of words as the artillery exchanges between their troops subsided. The previous five days had seen some of the worst bouts of fighting along the Kashmir border.

Mr Vajpayee said the Indian army was prepared to "repulse the nefarious designs of Pakistan", while Mr Sharif warned India not to forget that there were now two nuclear states in the subcontinent.



Cecil Rhodes: Target for rising anti-white anger

Threat to feed Rhodes to Zimbabwe crocodiles

Andrew Meldrum in Harare

AN African rights campaigner in Zimbabwe has called for the remains of the founder of Rhodesia, Cecil John Rhodes, to be dug up and thrown into the Zambezi river's crocodile-infested waters.

Lawrence "Warlord" Chakaredza said that the colonialist's grave in the Matopos National Park was offensive because the dramatically beautiful area was a traditional burial ground of chiefs. He said if the British government did not move the offending remains of Rhodes, then he would.

On morning the nation will find the national shrine cleansed of the white man's grave which is a mockery to the traditional importance of the

site," Mr Chakaredza told Zana, the state news agency.

Mr Chakaredza calls himself Chief Mumbumutapa III. He has been a radical university student leader and now heads Sangano Mumbumutapa — a group to promote traditional African rights and customs.

A spokesman for the British high commission in Harare said it was for the Zimbabwean government to decide what to do with Rhodes's grave, as the site is in a national park.

Mr Chakaredza said it would be easy to dig up the grave, but experts say it would take dynamite to dislodge the elaborate bronze cataplane, which is set in a granite boulder. Mr Chakaredza's threat to throw the bones to the crocodiles comes at a time of anti-British and anti-white sentiment in Zimbabwe.

President Robert Mugabe has been calling for the British government to pay for Zimbabwe's land resettlement. Last week he said British settlers had stolen land from Africans and now must pay for it.

The high commission spokesman, William Robertson, said Mr Chakaredza had a reputation for outrageous statements. He could not say if any of them had been acted on.

The group calls for a return to traditional values and society, but no one is sure of its membership, the diplomat said. "He claims to be a chief, though as far as we are aware he is not legally a traditional leader," Mr Robertson said.

"He has referred to the traditional importance of the site, but we do not know what the traditional importance is."

Congo revolt threatens Kabila

Alex Duval Smith
in Johannesburg

CONFLICTING signals were emerging last night about the impact of an army rebellion in which troops in the east of the Congo capital, Kinshasa, where sporadic fighting was reported around army barracks.

In Bukavu, Kindu and Gombe in the eastern south Kivu region, border posts with Rwanda were closed as ethnic Banyamulenge troops reportedly clashed with soldiers loyal to the president.

The rebellion is the most concerted action so far against President Kabila, who has faced mounting criticism since he came to power last May after a seven-month battle against the late dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko. That insurgency started in the east of the central African country where fighters from among the persecuted Banyamulenge rebelled against Mobutu in October 1996. They were supported by Tutsi-dominated troops from Rwanda who wanted to secure their borders against Rwandan Hutu rebels infiltrating from Zaïre.

On radio stations in Bukavu and Gombe, army commanders urged Congolese to rise against President Kabila, accusing him of corruption.

"We, the army of the Congo, have taken the decision to remove President Kabila from power," said a statement on the Goma-based Voice of the People.

In Kinshasa, officials accused Rwanda of fomenting the unrest, and there were reports that the defence ministry had ordered loyalist troops to kill Tutsi "agents" hiding in Kinshasa.

In the last few weeks, President Kabila's government has countered claims that it is doing little to improve the lot of the Congolese, with allegations that Rwandan Tutsis and Banyamulenge have been plotting against the regime.

Last week, the finance minister, Ferdinand Tala Ngila, was imprisoned for 24 hours during a visit by International Monetary Fund officials. "I was questioned about rumours of a putsch," he said after his release.

Two weeks ago, President Kabila sacked James Kabari, a Rwandan Tutsi who had been his top military commander and ordered tanks to be deployed in front of the presidential residence.

Yesterday, the Kinshasa-based People's Radio urged Congolese and foreigners "to stay calm and to stay at home until the armed forces re-establish civil order".

In Rwanda, a government spokesman denied that its troops were involved in the rebellion, saying they had left the Congo last week. But he admitted that their leaving could have played a role in the unrest. "The departure of our troops from Congo may have removed the control that they had, so that the conflict and the difference [among ethnic groups] could surface."

News in brief

Iraqi weapons talks 'may not continue'

TALKS between Baghdad and the United Nations on dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have reached an impasse and may not resume, the chief UN inspector, Richard Butler, said yesterday at the end of a second round of talks. He said Iraq had turned down his proposal for a future plan of action, adding: "We did not make the progress I have hoped for. I do not know whether we are going to meet tomorrow."

The Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, said after a three-hour session that the commission was "back to its old games" — ignoring Baghdad's progress in eliminating its weapons and focusing on "minor issues which make no sense from the angle of disarmament". — AP, Baghdad.

Havel's breathing restored

DOCTORS opened a hole in the Czech president Václav Havel's throat yesterday to aid his breathing after his lungs partially collapsed overnight, the president's medical team said.

Ernst Bodner, the Austrian surgeon leading the team, told a news conference that Mr Havel's vital signs were stable after the operation, conducted under general anaesthetic, and his breathing was again being sustained at a normal level by a respirator.

The doctors said the tracheotomy should allow Mr Havel, who is 61, to recover normally from his stomach operation eight days ago at Prague's Central Military Hospital, but they could not say how long it might take.

The president's right lung collapsed as a result of fluid building up from an infection which developed on Sunday night, just hours after he was taken off the respirator because his condition was improving. About half his right lung was removed 20 months ago. — Reuters, Prague.

Khartoum extends truce

THE Sudanese government declared a unilateral ceasefire yesterday throughout the south of the country, where a 15-year war with insurgents has aggravated a famine.

The announcement expands the scope of a three-month truce agreed by the government and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) last month. It will take effect today. The government did not say how long it would last.

Daniel Kofi Appiah, an SPLA representative in Cairo, described the ceasefire as "just a manoeuvre" before peace talks which begin in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa today. The government's spokesman, Ghazi Salah Eddin Aabani, said it demonstrated the government's keenness to prepare the ground for the success of the talks.

Aid workers estimate that about 1.5 million people face starvation in southern Sudan, mainly in Bahr al-Ghazal province, as a result of drought and the fighting. The UN World Food Program is dropping 9,500 tons of food a month. — AP, Khartoum.

Malta election called

THE Maltese prime minister, Alfred Sant, whose labour government has been rocked by resignations and parliamentary defeats, has called a general election on September 5, three years ahead of schedule. Mr Sant's one-seat majority has been undermined by the former prime minister Dom Mintoff, who has twice voted with the Nationalist opposition in connection with a development plan in his constituency.

The Nationalists will be led to the polls by Eddie Fenech Adami, who survived calls for his resignation as party leader when Labour returned to power after nine years of Nationalist rule in the 1996 general election. — AP, Valletta.

Cable car airmen sent for trial

A UNITED STATES military court has set dates for the separate trials of two marine officers flying the Prowler jet which severed a ski-lift cable in the Italian Alps in February, plunging 20 people to their death.

The pilot, Captain Richard Ashby, aged 30, whose trial will begin on December 7, and Captain Joseph Schweitzer, also 30, who will be tried on January 4, are charged with involuntary manslaughter and negligent homicide.

At their arraignment at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, yesterday, their lawyers complained that it would be difficult if not impossible to find an impartial jury of officers to hear the case because of the publicity that the incident has received.

They have also claimed that the decision to court-martial the officers was politically motivated, intended to defuse Italian protests. — Reuters, Camp Lejeune.

Rain hampers flood search

MORE rain turning mountain streams into raging torrents added to the problems of South Koreans searching for victims of Saturday's flash floods in the Mount Chiri national park yesterday.

As recovered bodies brought the death toll to 52, a firefighter was critically injured when a helicopter heading for the disaster area was buffeted by a sudden shower and crashed into a rice paddy. On Sunday a rescuer drowned trying to save others.

President Kim Dae-jung urged the 42,000 soldiers, police and firefighters to step up their rescue efforts and praised their heroism. — AP, Seoul.

China has another panda

CHINA'S panda research centre has scored another success with the birth of a cub conceived by artificial insemination: the 21st cub born at the centre in Wolong nature reserve in Sichuan province. So far 15 have survived to maturity.

It is the second cub born to an 8-year-old panda identified only as No 28. With fewer than 1,000 pandas left in the wild, and breeding in captivity notoriously difficult, the appearance of a new cub is regarded as cause for celebration.

The official Chinese news agency Xinhua also reported the birth of three Siberian tiger cubs at a zoo in Changchun last month, the ninth litter of a 13-year-old tigress called Yanchun. — PA, Beijing.

Strine undoes Skeet scam

AN AUSTRALIAN conned his way to five-star luxury, free drinks and a Hollywood lifestyle by passing himself off as the film star Skeet Ulrich — until one drink too many restored his outback accent and alerted his mother to the scam.

Brenton Jarrett arrived in Adelaide last week and used his similarity to the star to book a hotel suite, car, and bodyguards, asking for the bills to be sent to Paramount Studios. He offered interviews to television stations and newspapers, persuaded a casting agency to line up dates, and was feted in night clubs. Mr Jarrett, originally from the outback town of Wangaratta, was released by the police after he agreed to pay all the bills he had run up in Ulrich's name. — Keith Ains, Sydney.

Heavy work for light fingers

THIEVES have lifted more than 100 manhole covers from the streets of Bangkok in the past six months, prompting the metropolitan electricity authority to organise a team of 50 volunteer vigilantes to try to catch them in the act.

The solid steel lids weigh 400lb and cost about \$2,340 each. But scrap dealers pay the thieves only about \$7.20 a time, the authority says. — AP, Bangkok.

"I'm not interested in being Mrs Hendrix, not at all. What I am interested in is the truth. I don't like history being altered to serve nutters."
Jimi Hendrix's girlfriend interviewed

Comment

Diary

Simon Bowers

WITH rumours of division and dissent within New Labour growing apace, sensitivity and tact are proving invaluable qualities at Millbank. High Value Fundraiser Vanessa Rowcock has written to MPs inviting them to a Blackpool party conference dinner in September. (Also most welcome to attend are MPs' spouses, for a nominal charge of £50.) Guests are assured that Vanessa "will make every effort to inform you of whom you will be joining in advance of the dinner to ensure that there are no unforeseen problems." (Always so embarrassing when you know the face but can't recall the name.) "We pay close attention," continues Vanessa, "to seating plans to ensure that you are not at a table with inappropriate guests." Inappropriate guests? Oh my God! That's the last thing the Party needs right now. We call Vanessa and ask what possessed her to invite them? "You would have to speak to our Media Unit about this," she says, transferring our call. Adrian from the Media Unit is no more helpful. "I will only discuss this," he tells us, "with a serious political journalist on your newspaper." A sly remark, Adrian, and we have taken it to heart. Consider yourself unwelcome at the Diary's next focus-group meeting.

THE summer issue of Freemasonry Today arrives and proves a fascinating and informative read. From Snezana Lawrence's thought-provoking essay, On the Pentagram, to the lighter feature, Freemasonry in Trinidad and Tobago, the editor, Tobias Churton, has managed to pack each page with lively and inclusive copy. The letters page is no exception. "The more we make the public aware of our charitable work," one reader writes to Tobias, "the better we shall be able to control the amount of openness we want to give. I am proud to be a mason and do not seek to hide it, but we must accept the possibility that one day my name may be registered for every nosy-parker to see." For those who are interested, the letter is signed: W Bro J G Greenly, Wolverhampton.

THE close community of newspaper diarists has been in shock this weekend following the sad news of that regrettably undignified scuffle between Daily Mail columnist Nigel Dempster and his long-standing deputy, Adam Heliker, over the latter's imminent departure to the Sunday Telegraph diary. Mr Dempster, an exemplary exponent of the craft, has served as long as I have, and is a model to many younger diarists (myself included), and it is with disbelief that we view Adam's recent contretemps with the Master. Naturally, petty differences will be put aside in the coming weeks as the gossip community rallies behind Mr Dempster. The Guardian Diary will be launching its campaign to refuse and rebut any slur on Nigel's good name tomorrow.

CONGRATULATIONS to Curtis Brown literary agent Jonny Geller and his wife, Karen, on the recent arrival of their son Benjamin Harry (9th, Soz). "It was all over in 10 minutes," says the joyous father when we call. A mercifully quick labour then? "The deal, not the birth," adds Jonny sheepishly, "and I went straight back to the delivery room." We're sure he did, and while he hasn't told his wife yet, we nevertheless think a double celebration is called for as the deal Jonny managed to close, with HarperCollins in New York, was for Anouchka Forrester's debut novel, Ringing For You. A charming tale to tell the grandchildren, Jonny.

THE language of New Labour can often appear impenetrably clandestine to all but the sharpest of political insiders. Like a Picasso or a Hirst to the untutored eye, the rich possibilities of meaning are often lost in the apparent simplicity of style. For this reason, throughout the month of August the Diary will be publishing its very own People-Friendly Guide to New Labour Lexion. First instalment to appear here tomorrow.



I never thought I'd see a rerun of those absurd Spycatcher days

Paul Greengrass



TO ME, as the person who once wrote "Spycatcher", Peter Wright's words for his banned MIs memoirs a decade ago, there was something faintly depressing about reading the news of the arrest of the former MIs officer David Shayler — as there was also about last year's arrest and subsequent conviction of former MIs officer Richard Tomlinson. Like birching juveniles, or accepting uncorroborated confessions in terrorist trials, I thought sending spies to prison for leaking information to us was something we used to do only back in the bad old days.

Even the mad old whistle-blower himself, Peter Wright, never faced being wrestled to the ground by gun-toting French policemen, or spending months in a foreign prison as full extradition proceedings ground their way through the French courts. Based on extensive personal knowledge of these scenarios, there are three things of which I can be absolutely certain about the current turn of events.

First, David Shayler's information about the alleged plot to assassinate Colonel Gaddafi, along with the details of Richard Tomlinson's information about the alleged sabotage mission against the Iranian nuclear programme — and anything else that they know which might embarrass either service — will become public within a week.

Just as Mrs Thatcher was unable to prevent a copy of the Spycatcher manuscript from mysteriously making its way to New York publishers, and thence to the world, so

Tony Blair will be unable to prevent the same.

In the old days at least it was difficult. Somebody had to secretly get on a plane, fly to Amsterdam, change planes, and fly on to New York with a chunky manuscript disguised about his person. Once in New York there was the street corner assignment with the publisher to be handled in true spy thriller fashion. And the second copy to lodge in a safehouse in case of publisher's cold feet. Today, there's the Net. Shayler and Tomlinson's dossiers can (and will) be out there at the press of a button. It's not as romantic as the Spycatcher escapade, true, but then none of us involved ever really thought we were going to prison. And there's the rub — for it was fun. For these guys, it's serious. Seriously nasty. And seriously unjust.

The second racing certainty is that Mr Shayler, Mr Tomlinson and their materials will become more marketable. Now there is a courtroom event to follow in a foreign country. The story will run and run and both will become martyrs — freshpots launched at the heart of their former organisations.

Thirdly, the damage done to MIs and MIs's public reputation — both of which have recently improved — will be severe. At best we will be entertained to a rerun of the Spycatcher pantomime with the British Government rushing around the world like a demoralised little Dutch boy trying to stem a cascade of leaks at colossal public expense.

When Tomlinson was arrested and imprisoned last year for trying to sell his

memoirs, there was a curious lack of newspaper outrage, quite unlike the frenzy that accompanied and protected Wright. Those responsible for seeking Shayler's extradition clearly believed that if could also be achieved without a media storm. It will prove to be as dismal a miscalculation as the decision to seek an injunction against Spycatcher in the Australian courts. The sedness in all this is that in recent years — in fact since the Spycatcher case — there have been some signs of Britain moving its intelligence services into the modern world.

WE FINALLY have a system of parliamentary supervision of the intelligence services in place. Some would argue that it is feeble — and certainly it is far less stringent than that enjoyed by our principal intelligence allies in the US, Canada and Australia. But at least we have it. We now accept political oversight of these organisations, and can discuss them openly in parliament.

There have been other useful reforms — an ombudsman, staff counsellors, glossy brochures and mission statements, more briefings, open recruitment, lectures by heads of service. Most important, there has been significant thawing in the policy of release of intelligence papers. But now we see the whole process jeopardised by a crude resort to criminal law.

With these people never learn that if you want to police the frontiers of national security and deal successfully with the inevita-

ble border disputes that will always from time to time flare up between a free press and a responsible government, you have to do so with public consent, with sensitivity to civil liberties, and with a sense of proportionality.

What is the real fear that lies behind this latest arrest? I suspect that what has triggered it has been the meeting (probably engineered by the Sunday Times) between Shayler and Tomlinson and the fear that out of this might emerge a kind of electronic tribunal on the Internet, designed to attract graffiti from anyone with access inside British intelligence.

The drive towards the globalisation of information strikes at all the world's intelligence services. We should establish a publications board to vet manuscripts from intelligence veterans as they do in the US. This should operate to encourage publication wherever possible, thus boosting public confidence and providing a forum for the resolution of disputes. The Government should reserve prosecutions for where they belong — bona fide espionage.

And they should accept that there will always be from time to time a Peter Wright or a Richard Tomlinson or a David Shayler — people who for whatever reason feel sufficiently aggrieved that they cannot be tamed.

Let them have their say. They're going to have it anyway. You could almost say it was their basic human right. And whatever you do — don't prosecute them. It's wrong, and it only makes it worse.

Hugo Young is away

Research roundabout

Ros Coward



RESEARCH is now an imperative for all academics. In summer, some will have given two or three papers at conferences, writing them up later for publication. What lies behind all this frantic activity? There's a supreme irony in Ofsted chief Chris Woodhead's recent attack on academic research in education. The future of second-rate work he identifies is produced by the culture of crude "performance indicators" that Ofsted has done so much to promote. Academics work when they could be on holiday because the higher education sector is dominated by the need to accumulate research performance indicators. A paper delivered at a university conference is second only to a book or an article in a refereed journal. The next research assessment exercise in 2001 will determine the monetary fate of academic departments. Big research departments will pull in over £500,000 a year, and the more "research active" staff there are, the more money flows in. So numbers are bulked up with staff who have delivered conference papers among those with more prestigious published output.

At the root of the problem is the narrowness of the research performance indicators used. Few subject panels accept products like a TV programme or campaign material, however well researched or innovative. None accept textbooks, however painstakingly prepared. They only recognise research guaranteed by academic peers.

So it is in the interests of universities to host conferences, and to send employees to others — even in far-flung places. It works in reverse, too. At a recent conference I fell in with an academic from Virginia who was happily footing the drinking bill of the cash-strapped British academics. "I'm on the top rate for this conference," he said. "There's a fixed scale. This is a half hour paper with academics from 10 other countries so it's the top whack."

ANYONE can put on an academic conference, but each one is proved indicators of schemes like the literacy hour and neglect other aspects — music, sport, spiritual values. Woodhead is right about one thing: the tricks learnt to meet performance indicators are of little benefit to the whole field and still less to student development.

A successful conference taps into fashionable themes, pays for a couple of high-profile plenary speakers and then watches the money roll in. To break even or make a profit, many conference organisers accept all the papers proposed, the fear of financial loss outweighing intellectual integrity. To pack everyone in, there are often four parallel sessions an hour, each with three speakers. Unfortunate individuals travel across the world to present the product of their hard labour to a few people in 15 minutes.

This is no real quality control but a merry-go-round of buying kudos. The trick is to keep the circuit flowing without anyone noticing that there's nothing much there. Even the Higher Education Funding Council's recent consultation document on its research assessment exercise referred to "gamesmanship", a recognition of the tricks by which performance indicators can be acquired without much actual performance.

Optimists might hope market forces impose a rough and ready control of quality. Instead, the process encourages an undergrowth of shoddy research, menaced into the fashionable areas with most opportunities for conference attendance and publication — deconstruction, post-colonialism, ethnicities. This is what happens in a culture created by crude performance indicators. Giving conference papers is the lowest rung of the ladder of these indicators but one that most teachers can achieve. And with 15 minutes to present your papers, few notice the nakedness beneath the Emperor's new clothes, especially when woven in imperishable language. Woodhead

A successful conference watches the money roll in

has identified such work in his own academic backyard. But he blames the academics involved rather than his beliefs and methodologies.

Indeed, he wants to do to schools what has been done to universities: make funding and salaries follow the "findings" of the performance indicators. Higher education research has seen a rush towards the conference and publication arena, neglecting anything more arcane but possibly more innovative. This will happen in schools when teachers' pay is linked to performance in designated areas. Teachers will throw themselves at the Woodhead approved indicators of schemes like the literacy hour and neglect other aspects — music, sport, spiritual values.

Woodhead is right about one thing: the tricks learnt to meet performance indicators are of little benefit to the whole field and still less to student development.

On the bleak estates, with their crack houses and shelled-out schools, 'welfare dependency' is a fiction. No one clings to such a life.

You're wrong, Frank

Nick Davies

FRANK Field is a good man. He also knows more about welfare benefits than anyone else in Westminster. Nevertheless, for the 13 million people living in poverty in Britain, his forced departure from the Cabinet last week was good news. Field has been claiming with increasing bitterness that he failed to reform welfare because Gordon Brown at the Treasury and Harriet Harman, his boss at the DSS, obstructed him.

The truth, however, is that if in some imagined world, Field had been given supreme power over both the Treasury and the DSS, and had realised all his reforming dreams, he would not have altered the course of poverty. Simply, he got it wrong.

He was right, in a narrow sense, to complain about the Treasury. There is probably no more absurd

sight in contemporary British politics than a Labour government trying to attack poverty without redistributing wealth. As long as the Cabinet confuse a war against poverty, which is extremely expensive, with their ambition to cut the welfare budget, they will fail — and the DSS will swallow Alistair Darling and anyone else who dares to tread there.

Field was wrong in principle. The philosophical engine driving his thinking was his belief that he had to destroy the culture of welfare dependency. This pushed him a long way off course, because there is no such culture. It is a fiction, created by the same muddle of American conservatives and middle-market Fleet Street pundits who brought us most of the discredited right-wing ideas of the 1980s — monetarism, trickle-down, poll tax et al.

Out in the bleak inner-city estates, in dilapidated housing, in the shelled-out

community halls, in the hidden landscape of crack houses and illegal gambling dens, in the red-light areas and on the pavements where children play, there is no such culture. Instead, there are 10 million people who rely on a benefit which fails to provide the necessities of life and which has been cut and cut again with ruthless indifference to the welfare of those relying on it. There are 3 million others relying on earned incomes that are equally inadequate and would have been illegal had the Tories not scrapped the wages councils.

Why would anyone — how could anyone — cling to a life like that? Because they have no option. This is not some theoretical point. We have clear evidence to judge Field's theory. In 1986, Mrs Thatcher removed the general right to welfare benefit for 16- to 19-year-olds. If the theory of welfare dependency were correct, those young people — freed from the chains of state handouts — would

have found work or set up small businesses or enrolled in colleges and taken out mortgages. It didn't happen. Notoriously, they were shovelled out into the streets, into crime and prostitution and drugs and the most bitter alienation.

Last summer, when Frank Field boldly announced that benefits would be paid for those who worked and not for those who stayed at home, that the poor would be roped into compulsory saving schemes and pensions, that they would pay a new health insurance tax to fund the NHS, he was launching a possibly lethal attack on this culture of dependency. To put it another way, he was charging at windmills, challenging an enemy that did not exist with a set of weapons that were utterly irrelevant and even dangerous to the lives of the people he wanted to help.

This philosophical failure in turn reflected a failure of information. Field

knows a lot about benefit regulations but is terribly out of touch with the facts of life of the poor. The poverty he wants to tackle cannot be cured simply by the creation of jobs. Poverty is a character from poverty, say, 60 years ago.

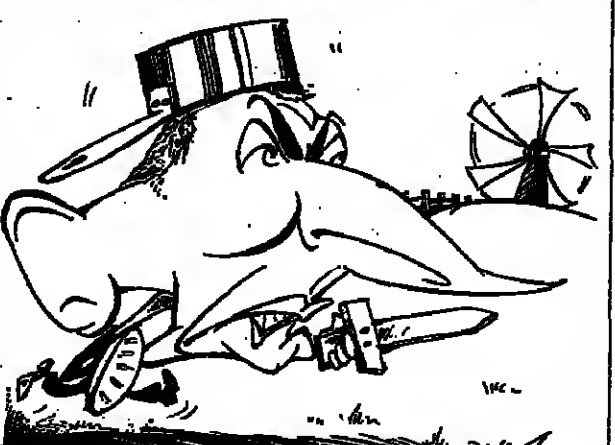
Material hardship now is combined with a cocktail of other social problems: the

huge black market in drugs which provides high-paid employment, status and excitement beyond anything offered by welfare-to-work; the collapse of the old working-class communities precipitated by the sale of council houses; the exclusion of delinquent children from their only avenue of escape — school — encouraged by the use of league

tables on which schools ultimately rely for funds; the institutionalised negligence of care-in-the-community which injects extra friction into the community; the epidemic of child abuse, physical and sexual, against which the reduced forces of social services fight a hopeless battle.

And the really alarming point about this cocktail is that each of its elements is provided by policies that lie at the heart of the most powerful departments in Whitehall. They were inherited from the Tories but without exception, they have been left in place by the Blair government to generate yet more damage. Together with the Treasury's inheritance of Tory spending limits, they are the cause of Britain's poverty and they are the real enemy that Frank Field should have been fighting.

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'I attended several SWP rallies without indulging in drunkenness or illicit sex'
Ian Birchall, Letters

Imploding Japan

Will the West be next?

A FEW months ago, most Western countries didn't think the economic crisis in the Far East was of any concern to them. They know better now. At the end of last week Siemens announced the closure of its new semiconductor plant on Tyneside with the direct loss of 1,100 jobs, an event triggered by the Asian crisis. Over the weekend President Clinton warned that Asia's downturn was already slowing down the US recovery — and yesterday HSBC, which among other things owns Midland Bank, revealed had debt write-offs in the region totalling \$1.15 billion. The question is how much worse it will be before getting better.

The core of the problem in Japan, Asia's regional leader, and the world's second biggest economy. Already mired in bad debts, currency depreciation and bankruptcies, Japan is now slithering towards the cliff of deflation when prices start falling regularly instead of rising. China is not far behind. In this situation people have a logical reason to postpone purchases of goods and services in the expectation of getting lower prices later on. But what is logical for the individual could be catastrophic for an economy that is not used to it. If people stop buying, factories will produce less. Sales of cars and trucks in Japan have been falling for 16 months. More and more people will be thrown out of work to make Japan's unemployment figures, already at record levels, even worse. Deflation could prove contagious as both Europe

and the US are experiencing inflation so low that economists are brushing up on the period before the second world war when deflation was a common occurrence.

Japan's situation is highly unusual. Its citizens save 13 per cent of their net incomes — over three times that of America. Saving is supposed to be a good thing but it is the profligate Americans who have a successful economy while virtuous Japan has started to contract. The problem? People won't spend any of their massive savings even though the government has pushed through a series of expansionary measures — with yet more promised by the new government whose finance minister, Kiichi Miyazawa is 78. Mr Miyazawa is not short of advice. Economists, mainly American, have been urging him to reduce income taxes and/or expand the money supply and/or boost public spending in order to persuade people to go into the shops and spend. Some have even resurrected the theoretical scenario envisaged by both Lord Keynes and Milton Friedman in which the best solution could be to distribute money freely, even if it has to be dropped on the population by helicopter. Most of them agree that what Japan now needs is a sustained period of inflation in the hope that, faced with goods being more expensive tomorrow, they will buy more today. In theory — and in the economic textbooks — this ought to work. But in practice it may make the Japanese, already desperately worried about unemployment and financing their retirement, even more cautious. Who knows, maybe it would be better — and assuredly cheaper — to persuade the Emperor to exhort everyone to spend, spend, spend in the national cause.

The rest of the world has a vested interest in the outcome for two reasons. First, as is becoming increasingly obvious, we live in a linked global economy in which a serious

Japanese recession would have had repercussions everywhere. Second, we badly need practical experience of how to deal with falling prices in a globalised economy. It may not happen, but we had better be prepared in case it does. East Asia is suffering an unnecessarily severe depression which could have been avoided if the right decisions had been taken earlier. It would be tragic if the rest of the world were to be dragged down as well.

Empty cannon?

It needs an enquiry

TWO AND A half days after the M15 defector David Shayler was arrested in France to face a British extradition request, the affair is already having the reverse effect from what the Government can have intended. The gist of whatever "revelations" Mr Shayler was poised to make is already in the public domain. More detail may appear on the Internet to keep the pot boiling. If the French authorities decide not to send back Mr Shayler, he is free to indulge in more purported revelations. If he stands trial, this will guarantee more publicity but not necessarily a conviction. Having committed a serious error in the first place by employing such a loose cannon, M15 has now ensured that he fires off more salvos.

Whether Mr Shayler's latest targets are hit accurately is very hard to say. It was reported over the weekend that he had been planning to publish details of an alleged plot to assassinate the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. This would not be illegal under the 1994 Intelligence Services Act, which provides a cloak of immunity for any criminal act — so long as it happens outside the British Isles. Britain has a whiffy no-

assassination directive dating back over 40 years. But this is nothing like as explicit as the US presidential prohibition signed by Ronald Reagan in 1981. Nor did this stop the American attempt on Mr Gaddafi's life in April 1996 — backed by Britain.

Mr Shayler's allegations have been denied — which is why they could be reported. There must be considerable doubt, in view of his earlier track record, whether a junior employee of M15 with an exaggerated opinion of himself is believable on matters of knowledge of which would, or should, be confined to the very highest levels. It passes belief that anyone should believe that the consequences of assassinating a hostile foreign leader can be forecast and would necessarily be favourable to the interests of those who instigated it. It may be embarrassing for any allegations to be aired when Britain is about to propose a compromise which could bring the two Libyans accused of involvement in the Lockerbie affair to trial. But they have been aired in the most unsatisfactory way.

The only solution to this mess in the short-term is for an inquiry which would pin down Mr Shayler's outpourings on this and other subjects and establish what truth if any lies behind them. In the longer term, the security services need to behave more responsibly and accountably: that is the only way to silence the loose cannons.

Ken's capital

It'll be a lively race for London

ONE year ago this newspaper called on Labour activists to look kindly on Ken Livingstone's bid for a place on the party's National Executive Committee — a place also sought by Peter Mandelson. We argued

then that one did not have to agree entirely with Mr Livingstone to back him: one simply had to welcome the presence of an independent-minded, sometimes troublesome politician in the inner circles of a party which had grown rather too fond of conformity.

Well, yesterday we felt that same sentiment beating in the Guardian breast once more. Mr Livingstone offered his manifesto for London in a bid to become the capital's first directly-elected mayor — and we're delighted. It's not that every idea in the document is perfect — some will require much more detail before they convince — but he is a welcome entrant in a race that will be the largest direct election in British history. His presence is good for London and good for Labour.

Much of the Livingstone manifesto is good common sense. He's right to insist that the new authority will need tax-raising powers if it is to sort out the capital's most pressing problems, particularly transport. It's equally sound that the new body should include health and further education in its brief. Red Ken is not averse to the odd dash of populism. Free entry to London Zoo and Kew Gardens, paid for by an airport tax on tourists, will bring applause from many Londoners. His call for the return of conductors on buses and guards on trains is shamelessly populist — and bound to be popular. Harder to work out is Mr Livingstone's call for a two-year term limit, and a personal promise to serve no more than one term. If Londoners choose Ken, they'll want him to have enough time to get the job done.

Still, it's good that a veteran London leader has declared his interest. The race for the job will now be a lot livelier, with the Labour machine hopefully learning a valuable lesson: that a strong government need not control everything — and everyone.

Letters to the Editor

Sex, spies and Monicagate

DAVID Shayler's partner, Annie Machon, says (Runaway M15 agent faces trial, August 3) M15 wasted money on surveillance of SWP rallies at Skegness where the "only activity" was excessive drinking and pairing up. I attended several rallies without indulging in drunkenness or illicit sex. But I do recall a lecture by a member of the SWP central committee, who urged us to be sceptical about "strong state theories" because the security services were an incompetent sham. Ian Birchall, London.

YOUR obituary of Sir David Hunt (July 31) mentions his suggestion that it was British media adulation of Rommel which improved his reputation among Germans. Many Germans respect Rommel as a conspirator against Hitler. His memorial stone is not about his military exploits: it marks the spot where he took the poison which alone freed him from the Führer's retribution. Michael Smith, Swaffham, Suffolk.

YOUR Country Diary correspondent, Audrey Insh, may consider that "footpaths and rights of way are no longer needed". Perhaps if she lived in a city she would not begrudge the opportunity that footpaths give to those of us who enjoy fresh air. Alwyn Farwood, Sale, Cheshire.

MALCOLM Hurwitt (Letters, July 31) misses the point that compulsory medication enables people who would otherwise be hospitalised to live in the community. If I developed a serious mental illness, I would be glad that my health could be maintained in the community with a treatment order. Dr Tracey Sugrue, Havant, Hants.

ARE we to understand that the police are leading the way in complementary therapies (CS gas) to support traditional psychiatric services (electricity for ECT)? Valerie and Chris Gillespie, Derby.

PRESUMABLY if Mr Clinton had come clean some time ago, there would not be a stain on his character? Justin Dillon, London.

Refugees, bums and us

THE Home Office white paper, *Fairer, Faster and Firmer*, is full of tough talk toward asylum-seekers, who are made to sound like scoundrels at best and criminals at worst (Asylum seekers, July 29). But the paper is thin on ideas about achieving better reasoned decisions early on in the asylum process.

Rather than ensuring a better process, Mr Straw has set his mind on pre-empting it by introducing stricter "pre-entry controls". Some 15 more immigration officers will be sent abroad to coach airline staff on how to prevent asylum-seekers without valid passports and visas from getting on the airlines. How will Mr Straw know whether these asylum-seekers are genuine refugees or not? And if they live to appeal, it will be automatically disallowed.

In a bone-rattling phrase, the Home Office says that "to deter and prevent the arrival of inadmissible passengers... it will engage ministerial counterparts in the countries concerned". Are British officials going to finger those attempting to flee human rights abuses for the airport police to intercept them? What the Home Office "engage" ministries of the interior in torture states to alert them to the attempted flight of would-be asylum-seekers? Sherman Carroll, Caring for Victims of Torture Medical Foundation, London.

SABEL Hilton is right that the Home Office's approach is permeated by a damaging culture of disbelief. A "firm, fast and fair" asylum policy cannot be built on this approach, which poisons the atmosphere in which initial decisions are made, leading to a heavy load of appeals and increasing delays.

Mike O'Brien, the minister, refuses to admit that the "shambles" in Britain's asylum procedure is caused by his continuation of the previous government's policy of deterring all asylum-seekers, regardless of the strength of their cases. This automatically leads to a culture of disbelief, to bad decisions and to the disastrous use of detention and destitution as a means of discouraging refugees from exercising their rights under the 1951 UN Convention. Andy Gregg, Director, Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service, London.

SABEL Hilton is ill-informed. There is clear evidence of unscrupulous immigration racketeers that are and are being abused by a loophole to bring in migrants under the guise of asylum-seekers. Since 1988, 250,000 "asylum-seekers" have arrived, mostly in London, and are placing an intolerable burden on the poorest boroughs. There have also been instances of organised

benefit fraud involving "asylum-seekers" and their crooked advisers.

There is understandable resentment that refugees have been given preference in housing. The greatest resentment comes not from the AIF Gannets, but from other ethnic migrants who came here with nothing and worked hard for whatever they have. Poor people should not be expected to provide for an endless stream of bogus asylum-seekers. Westminster Council is to be commended for housing them in Liverpool. Vouchers instead of grants would also deter economic and welfare migrants from urging their relatives to join them here.

Jack Straw is right. Bogus asylum-seekers should be removed as soon as possible. The others should be dispersed to outlying parts of the UK where they will be better placed to learn English. Julian Sorel, London.

SABEL Hilton failed to touch on the similar problems which exist elsewhere in the Immigration and Nationality Directorate. It currently takes 14 months to process applications for naturalisation and there is also an enormous backlog of non-asylum cases awaiting decisions; some of these were lodged over 10 years ago. Name and address supplied.



Bad vibrations at Stonehenge

CELEBRATIONS of the "environmental benefits" of a cut-and-cover road tunnel for the A303 at Stonehenge may be somewhat premature (Leader, August 1). The 1995 Round-Table Planning Conference rejected all variants of the "Yellow" route, including a short cut-and-cover tunnel, because of the impact on the Stonehenge Bowl and the world heritage site, including the loss of six scheduled ancient monuments. A longer, bored tunnel, on a new alignment avoiding Stonehenge Bottom, was proposed for further consideration. The cost of this led the Tories to drop plans to dual the A303 at Stonehenge.

Labour now presents us with the bizarre idea of tunnelling from the top of the hill at New King Barrow. Due to the gradient they will apparently have to tunnel over Stonehenge Bottom, encasing the road in a modern perversion of an ultra-long barrow — to compensate, perhaps, for the barrow they must destroy further west. The effect of underground road traffic vibration on Stonehenge is untested, and let us hope that it remains so. If Labour really wants to remove the A303 from Stone-

henge, they could go back to the 1995 environmental report and the long tunnel. More sensibly, given the long time-scale and absurd cost involved, they could set a date to downgrade the A303 to a highway and meanwhile invest in the railways, the only long-term option for long-distance travel in the South-west. Hamish Soutar, Salisbury.

THE residents of many congested small towns will be disappointed by the cutbacks in the roads programme. It is a great shame that the road engineers, when they design by-passes, insist on building wide, straight race-tracks with cuttings and embankments. The experts should not be on speeding up the traffic, but relieving communities. Thus, there should be a move to build by-passes as "ordinary" roads, with actual curves and gradients — and even hedges.

The experts will tell us that wide, straight roads are safer — but it must be doubted whether roads which encourage faster traffic and more traffic are really safer overall. Dr Chris Paice, Lancaster.

England's glory

A DUTCH friend living in Brussels complained he could only find one-size-fits-all condoms here (available in three packs at only 20p/30p). He tried 10 chemists before being offered something more comfortable to slip into. How, I wondered, did the rest of Europe manage? With holiday romance in mind, I checked at Boots, London Waterloo, and found a wide and accessible display of multiple styles, colours, strengths and sizes.

Between trains at Montparnasse Station, Paris, I checked out a chemist in the city where men traditionally behave as if they invented sex. There were no condoms on display. I was led to a drawer behind the counter. "How many — three, six, 12 or 24?" the young (male) assistant asked. When I asked, he revealed a separate drawer full of King Size Manix (sic), clad to sober, medicinal white and blue packaging. So much for English reserve about sex. Latin lovers, all points. Eva Kaluzynska, Brussels.

Downturns

THE story of the Siemens closure (Jobs blow to hi-tech hopes, August 1) makes depressingly familiar reading. A branch plant is set up in an area of long-term industrial decline, is briefly held up as the saviour of that area, and then closes down as soon as the going gets rough.

We are dealing with the effects of an Asian downturn combined with an unjustifiably strong pound. If one adds the possible implications of world over-capacity in a wide range of industries, it's clear that massive swathes of our industrial sector are seriously exposed, or soon will be, to the forces of recession. Labour's main historical reason for being has been in defending Britain's industrial communities. The next few months will provide a critical test of whether New Labour accepts or rejects this fundamental responsibility. Peter Mandelson, the Industry Minister and spin-doctor-in-chief for New Labour, now has a pivotal role in all this. Dr Colin Crouch, Harrow Weald, Middx.

Wooden claim

THE Timber Trade Federation (TTF) claims (Letters, August 1) that its "pragmatic and unexciting" purchasing policy and voluntary agreement with Brazilian exporters are practical ways of making progress on reducing rainforest destruction. Unfortunately, this is not the case. These agreements and labels are all too often misleading propaganda. Statements from loggers claiming they don't log illegally are presented as independent and reliable verification. The reality is that most mahogany from the Amazon is illegally produced. Friends of the Earth is keen to promote the use of sustainable timber. This is why we and other environmental groups support the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) which provides an independent certification scheme subject to principles drawn up by the trade bodies, forestry experts and non-governmental organisations.

How supportive is the TTF of this practical initiative? Not very, it seems. Following the broadcast of a recent Home Front television programme, which encouraged the environmentally conscious consumer to look for the FSC label when buying timber, the TTF contacted the BBC to stress that an FSC label "is not the sole assurance of timber's environmental soundness". The TTF says that consumers have a choice when buying timber. We think their choice is an easy one to make. Sarah Tyack, Forest campaigner, Friends of the Earth, London.

We atheists

SO Nicolas Walter is going to end his 50-year relationship with the Guardian because he was disgusted by the publication of Albert Pierrepoint's version of his role in the execution of Derek Bentley (Letters, August 1). He calls it "murder" and I agree with him, but what can a self-proclaimed exponent of free speech and tolerance be thinking about when he refuses to continue reading a newspaper because it dares to publish an article he finds offensive? I find everything Nicolas Walter writes offensive, but I have no objection whatsoever to the Guardian publishing what he has to say. What is that unregenerate old atheist going to read now he has given up the best newspaper for believers in his philosophy? Laurie Charles Baillic, Luxembourg.

school education to Roma children to improve their integration into ordinary schools. The government has recognised the need to rework the tests used to determine the need to place children in special schools. It has also expressed concern over the unacceptable gap between its decisions and their implementation by local authorities. The title alludes to the deplorable wish of some in the Ministry to build a dividing wall in Matinea Street. There is no question it will ever be built. Pavel Seifert, Ambassador of the Czech Republic.

Czechs and balance on the Roma story

I WOULD like to correct the following statements in Linda Grant's article (In the ghetto, July 25) on the Romanies: ● In a new state created in 1989 by former Charter 77 dissidents (sic), institutionalised racism is enshrined in the law of land. "The Constitution of the Czech Republic grants all citizens equal rights and the Czech Criminal Code contains explicit provisions for punishment of racial crime and protection of the victims." ● "Since the Velvet Revolution, the Roma... were stripped of citizenship." No body was stripped of citizenship after the Velvet Revolution. Tens of thousands of Czechs and Slovaks were stripped of citizenship by the Communists before 1989. ● (Since the Velvet Revolution), the Roma were denied benefits. Ms Grant contradicts herself as she quotes her Roman source, Veronika Cibikova, as saying that "It's true that the young people are now used to welfare and never work, but whose fault is that?"

It's the system in this country," Veronika Cibikova is referring to the relatively high welfare benefits which make it easy for a family with numerous children to rely on the welfare system. ● "Roma children do not attend the same schools as Czechs but are automatically sent to 'special schools' for the educationally sub-normal." Roma children have never been sent to special schools automatically. Since the Velvet Revolution, the government has been providing pre-

A-levels are up to standard

IN June this year I was one of many thousands of Year 13 students to take their A-level exams. I attend a typical sixth form near Coventry and hold a conditional offer of AAA to read geography at Corpus Christi, Cambridge. A-level results will be published on August 20. Year after year I have seen complaints being made about the declining standards of both GCSE and A-level exams and I am fed up with it. Not only does it dishearten people like me who have worked relentlessly for two years in the hope of achieving the grades needed to go to our chosen universities, but it makes us feel like our achievements and hard work have been for very little. I am not suggesting that declining standards are not an issue, I simply question why teaching and examination standards only ever seem to be considered at this time of year. We have more challenging and varied social lives on

offer to us today. Nearly all of my friends studied three A-levels while holding down a part-time job to give them the financial freedom to enjoy their free time. Add to that extra-curricular activities, relationships, the upkeep of a car and hobbies. On top of all that, we need some time to maybe sleep and eat. I challenge anyone to come up with a fair balance and not be exhausted by the end of the two years. I would also say that the quality of teachers has improved, which should be recognised, not criticised. We must not always be so negative and recognise improving teaching standards and newer, more dynamic syllabuses. Only by doing this alongside continual monitoring of exam content and assessment criteria can a fair balance be achieved to ensure that on August 20, our day, we don't feel like our hard work has been undermined. Paul Johnson, Coventry.

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Analysis Cultural diplomacy

No business like show business

... but for the British Council that doesn't just mean the Bard and Rachel Whiteread: it means the language of business, diplomacy, science and — with the advent of Lady Kennedy yesterday as its new boss — human rights. **Ian Black** reports

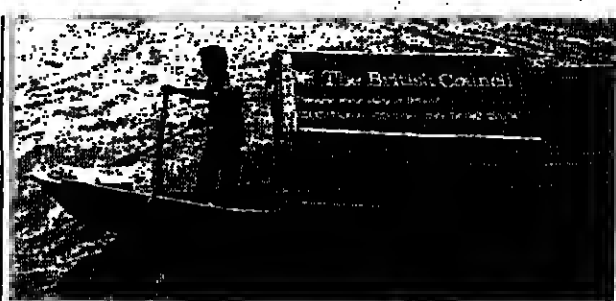
MORRIS dancers in Ulan Bator, madrigals in Mauritania, Shakespeare in Santiago — staged for the benefit of eccentric expatriates and Anglophile natives such as the popular images of the British Council, poor relation of the Foreign Office and neglected sibling of the BBC World Service, yet still rated by many as the most effective instrument of British influence in the world.

Yet what these jolly images show is how little the British Council is known. "We do put on a lot of exhibitions," says one sheepish PR chap, "but the problem is they're all in places like Afghanistan or New Zealand". Household name it isn't, but things could be looking up for the cultural arm of British diplomacy. Yesterday a heavyweight and impeccably Blairite new chairperson arrived in the form of Helena Kennedy, high-profile barrister, educationalist, Labour peer, women's activist and networker extraordinary.

Lady Kennedy's arrival comes at a teasing time for a bruised institution. Three years ago, under the Tories, it faced a budget cut of 16 per cent, revised after protests to Malcolm Rifkind, then Foreign Secretary, down to about 10 per cent, but still costing 400 jobs, mainly at the council's Manchester office, sacrificed to maintain its "front line" presence in far-flung parts.

Now, with a government that takes image and branding with deadly seriousness, staff sense they may have not only a tactical defence against the dreaded Treasury axe but a new, wider *raison d'être*. "There is a good period in prospect for the council, a new mood that is more than rhetoric," says Alastair Niven, director of literature.

The latest annual report gives some idea of just how much more modern than the old travelling players' image it already is. To promote the United Kingdom as a "forward-looking and dynamic democracy" it employs 5,000 staff in 230 offices in 108 countries, their main asset the (British) English language — and not just the language of the Bard, but of business, diplomacy and science. Kennedy arrived too late in the financial year to have much effect on the council's spending allocation. This was a paltry £1.2 million plus inflation over the next three years handed on by the Foreign Office, which still controls its budget. In public, David Drewry, the director-general,



The British Council

could express only "relief" at this "modest increase". Kennedy, who taught English for the council in Hamburg as a student, wants to put more emphasis on human rights, gender issues and good governance projects involving the police and judicial training. Multiculturalism is seen increasingly as a strength of the new Britain — an ambitious conference on Islam is planned next February in Brighton. "The remit of the council is much wider than is ever

realised," Kennedy says. "Britain is a key conveyor of opportunities to talk about values and human rights is not something to be sneered at."



David Drewry

Yet sneering there is. Nicholas Soames, a Tory friend of the council who took part in a typically little-noticed Commons debate about it last month, hoped that under Kennedy's stewardship it would not become "a quasi-politically correct organisation promoting overseas some of the more loopy British fairy-tale ideas of the moment." But even this former defence minister said that given a choice between dispatching a Royal Navy frigate or the Royal Shakespeare Company to a foreign port, he would go for the cul-

ture rather than guns. It is surprising how little party politics does intrude. Virginia Bottomley, the former Heritage Secretary, is deputy chair and speaks approvingly of changing "traditional perceptions." She points to achievements in promoting modern British creativeness, citing the success of Rachel Whiteread's sculpture at the Venice Biennale and Stanley Spencer's growing reputation in the United States.

Yet no one at the council likes Cool Britannia, partly because that now derided concept suggests that it is only British culture that needs projecting, when British expertise in a range of other fields is much sought after — and highly marketable. The council is sensibly represented on Panel 2000, intended to coordinate efforts involving the Foreign Office, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Confederation of British Industry and the British Tourist Authority. "Cool Britannia is ghastly sloganeering," argues Kennedy. "It's just as narrow and constricting as the Beefeater image we're trying to counter."

Devolution within Britain and the re-awakening of the peoples of the realm provide opportunities for internal redefinition. "The whole idea of national identity and the distinctiveness of Britain as opposed to Germany, France or New Zealand becomes more important as you struggle to attain a competitive edge," says one official.

Comparisons with the parallel efforts of other countries are difficult. Spain, Canada and Singapore have all re-branded themselves in recent years. But France and Germany do things differently from the British

Preaching the gospel in Sarawak (top); in Prague through drama (in text); in Kenya through Pan Project and the production of Pulling Down Babel (left)



David Drewry

British Council
Official UK overseas aid and a key player in the promotion of British culture and values.
Activities: English language promotion, cultural exchange, educational co-operation, scientific and technical co-operation, and promotion of British culture and values.

British Academy
The UK's leading body for the promotion of the study of the humanities.
Activities: Grants and awards, research, and promotion of British culture and values.

Cultural Relations Department Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Coordinates UK cultural policy and promotes British culture and values.
Activities: Grants and awards, research, and promotion of British culture and values.

Goethe Institute
Promotes German culture and values.
Activities: Grants and awards, research, and promotion of German culture and values.

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen
Promotes German culture and values.
Activities: Grants and awards, research, and promotion of German culture and values.

Goethe Institute
Promotes German culture and values.
Activities: Grants and awards, research, and promotion of German culture and values.

Goethe Institute
Promotes German culture and values.
Activities: Grants and awards, research, and promotion of German culture and values.

UK
Total funding £429m

Other share
£168m

France
Total funding £719m

Other share
£65m

Germany
Total funding £697m

Other share
£65m

Other share
£65m

Direction Générale des Affaires Culturelles, Scientifique et Techniques
Based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Implements France's cultural, scientific and technical co-operation policy. Activities: Promotes the spread of French culture, language and scientific co-operation via its extensive network of overseas centres, institutes, schools, and model organisations such as L'Alliance Française.

Association Française d'Action Artistique
Promotes international exchanges in visual and performing arts. Activities: Plans and co-ordinates French presence at festivals around the world; organises cultural seasons, tours and exhibitions; supporting artists abroad or coming to France to study; models French network of cultural establishments abroad.

Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique
Promotes French culture and values. Activities: Provides education and training on the environment, sustainable development, promotes culture and civilisation, legal and judicial co-operation.

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FinanceGuardian

Shares in Hong Kong plunge as soaring bad debts in Asia take toll

Crisis costs HSBC £694m

Jill Treanor

HSB, which owns Midland Bank in this country, showed the true extent of the crisis sweeping Asia when it announced its largest ever provision against bad debtors of \$84 million yesterday. The provision for the first half of the year was four times greater than that made at the same time last year, and much larger than City analysts expected.

Even though HSBC is one of the largest players in Asia, the size of the provision was a surprise and sent a worrying signal to the market about the problems the region is storing up for the future. HSBC's provisions level may attract attention to NatWest's exposure in Asia when it reports its interim results today. Standard Chartered, the other London-based bank with a big Asian business, will be the subject

of even closer scrutiny tomorrow, although the City believes it will not feel the pain to the same extent as HSBC. It is now becoming clearer that a number of the region's economies are on the brink of recession — and economists are finding it hard to determine when the bottom of the cycle will be reached.

Keith Whitson, HSBC's chief executive, painted a

cautious outlook for the next half of the year. Analysts cut profit forecasts for the full year, and warned that HSBC may need to make a similarly large provision in the second half of the year.

The provision ate into the bank's profits, which HSBC announced yesterday had fallen 14 per cent before tax to \$3.67 billion (\$3.24 billion) in the first half. Before the pro-

vision for bad debts, operating profits rose 13 per cent.

The results stunned the market, and HSBC's shares ended the day in London at 1.49p, down more than 2 per cent but above the day's lows.

In Hong Kong, where the stock is also listed, the market is expected to extend yesterday's 5 per cent fall racked up ahead of the results, which were published after dealing

had closed. Sentiment in Hong Kong was also knocked by confirmation of the economic difficulties there with news that the territory's gross domestic product fell by 2.8 per cent in the first quarter of 1998.

Mr Whitson did little to calm investor nerves by saying that he could not gauge the extent of the problems in Asia in the coming months.

"Unless you have a bigger and better crystal ball than we do, we are not in a position to judge accurately what is going to happen in a number of countries in Asia going forward," he said.

The bank has not dipped into the special general provision of £175 million made at the end of last year, which Mr Whitson yesterday described as a "second line of defence".

More than 50 per cent of the latest provision was against the bank's exposure to Indonesia and Thailand, countries which have received assistance from the International Monetary Fund.

Mr Whitson stressed that HSBC was highly capitalised and had been able to "support creditworthy customers when our competitors are cutting their losses".

"A lot of organisations are very quick to increase [their provision in the region] and quite to get our agents. Our view is that we are a long-term player," he said.

Notebook

Endless torrent of discontent



Edited by Mark Milner

WITH every passing day it is becoming clearer that the West has underestimated the fallout from the Asian crisis; the flow of bad news is turning into a torrent.

Take yesterday. The Hong Kong authorities said the economy had contracted by 2.8 per cent on the first three months of the year — its initial estimate was 2 per cent — and admitted the second quarter was even worse.

If the third quarter also shows a fall, as it almost certainly will, Hong Kong will have run into a recession of a depth and duration without parallel in its history.

On the corporate front, Japan's electronics group NEC revealed that it, too, was suffering from the vicious price war in the semiconductor market that last week forced Siemens to announce it was preparing to shut its North Tyneside plant.

Even the good news is bad. South Korea — victims of the semiconductor saga, according to Siemens — recorded a \$3 billion trade surplus last month, but only because external trade fell off a cliff.

Exporters showed their largest fall for more than 13 years but Seoul saw the surplus soar because imports crashed by almost half.

Small wonder, then, that HSBC bank — which probably knows what is going on in Asia as well as anyone — should be reluctant to guess just how deep and far-reaching the Asia crisis will prove.

A first-half provision of more than \$1 billion against bad debt — to add to the \$289 million special provision taken at the end of last year — suggests, however, that the bank is hardly sanguine.

It is an attitude of mind that some who affected surprise at the size of the HSBC provision — the shares fell around 2 per cent yesterday — might do well to adopt.

Utility carousel

THE sales are on again at electricity boards. Privatisation shut down many local showrooms where consumers could pay their bills and buy appliances relatively cheaply. It also set in motion an ownership carousel which yesterday saw London Electricity on the market.

The LEB — as it used to be — was bought by the US utility company, Entergy, less than 18 months ago. Then, it was fashionable for US companies to buy British utilities, and of the English regional electricity companies only Southern Electric kept its independence.

But it does not take long for business fashions to change, and now it is "back to ba-

sics", according to Entergy's new boss. He has followed the fashion set by fellow US utility Dominion Resources, which sold East Midlands Electricity to Powergen six weeks ago. Most of the other US owners of British electricity distributors are also thought to be ready to reverse their rush into British homes.

The supposed gold mine of steady and abundant cash flows has proved illusory, although with tax benefits from the Government, Entergy is confident it will make a handsome profit on the deal and insists there is no shortage of interested suitors.

But the key question for British electricity-users is what happens to their service while the ownership of assets is tossed around on the international capital markets.

London Electricity naturally insists that it is concerned only with its customers, but it would be surprising if the question of ownership did not question its senior managers.

It is to be hoped that the regulatory regime will ensure that present and future owners cannot milk consumers. But changes of ownership must add to the regulator's burdens, as well as making it more difficult for companies to improve services.

Season adjusted

NEVER mind the weather, it must be summer. How can one tell? Easy. Just look at the level of the pound against the German mark — a cornerstone of continental European currency values.

Just as the British holiday rush to Europe's hot spots hits its peak, the pound is doing the opposite. Yesterday sterling dropped below 2.90 marks, just as it did in early August last year. Indeed, over the last month, the pound has fallen by 12 pence.

The scale of the slide is a worry for more than Britain's Costa-hound hordes. The monetary policy committee, which is due to meet later this week, will for two reasons have sterling on its mind.

First, central bankers and their advisers do not like sharp currency movements, and although the pound's recent slip has hardly been precipitate, it will have been fast enough to set the eyebrows twitching in Threadneedle Street.

Secondly, the strength of sterling has been one of the factors which has been factored into the MPC's strategy as it tries to hit the Government's inflation target.

Consequently any significant erosion of the strength will tempt the MPC into adjusting other bits of policy — otherwise known as raising interest rates — if it still feels the inflation risks are on the up-side.

Oddly enough, raising rates might be counterproductive. The pound could fall on the back of higher rates because of the consequences for the real economy. Yesterday's survey from the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply shows just how bad things are. Will the MPC see things that way? Don't bank on it.



Despite the crisis, bank chief Keith Whitson, left, and finance director Douglas Flint are sanguine: 'We're long-term players' PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Eastern exposure Other companies feeling the fall-out

LIBERTY

The store in London's Regent Street that has become a first stop for tourists blamed the Far East downturn as a big factor behind a £11.5 million loss in the year to January. The newly-appointed chairman, Philip Bowman, admitted that the new management — installed after a boardroom coup with the backing of the founding family — had its work cut out to repair the damage.

The Rack

Asia's crisis has knocked the company sideways in the first half of the year because three out of five shops are outside the UK — about half of its sales are from abroad. Roy Bishko, the chairman, recently issued a profits warning because of the Far East crisis's impact coupled with the pound's strength. Shares stood at 50p yesterday — a quarter of the price they were a little more than a year ago.

Dixons

Sir Stanley Kaime, the company's chairman, admitted feeling nervous about the Far East turmoil. Falling prices in the region, he said, were being largely offset because many purchase contracts had been negotiated in dollars, but this could be about to end and the "exceptional price-deals" on offer from Far Eastern suppliers could find their way through to shop counters.

BAA

The operator of airports including Heathrow and Gatwick is hugely exposed in the Far East crisis — notably because the upmarket outlets in airport malls have been affected by the recent fall in the number of high-spending shoppers. Because of the Asian crisis, BAA will this month cease regarding Far East shoppers as a special category, instead it will embark on another costly redesign aimed at affluent frequent travellers from Britain.

The EMI Group

Despite nurturing homegrown bands as it has done in Japan, EMI, along with other companies such as PolyGram, has seen sales ravaged by the Asian downturn — particularly in Japan, the world's largest non-western music market. The company, already fighting piracy throughout the Pacific Rim, now hopes that encouraging local talent will help it recover earnings.

Fraudster Milken makes millions on Merseyside

Nicholas Bannister, Chief Business Correspondent

MICHAEL Milken was used to making billions during his time as Wall Street's junk-bond king in the 1980s. Now the disgraced financier, who ended up paying a fine of \$1.1 billion (\$800 million) and spending

22 months in prison for securities fraud, will be grateful for the millions he is now making on Merseyside. His first investment in Britain after coming out of jail was in Spring Group, of the Wirral. Spring yesterday reported that pre-tax profits for 1997-98 had risen 50 per cent to \$18.1 million on turnover

which more than doubled to \$279.2 million. The company, formerly known as CRT, has spent about £50 million acquiring eight companies during the last year and is now one of the country's leading computer recruitment and training businesses. It has benefited from the soaring demand for information technology services

and personnel as firms have struggled to get to grips with the introduction of the single European currency and the year 2000 conversion. Mr Milken, together with US software billionaire Larry Ellison, bought into CRT for £109 million in 1996 through their Los Angeles-based Education Technology partnership,

and now own a 48 per cent stake. But Spring is run by chief executive Karl Chapman who yesterday said it was likely to make further acquisitions during the current financial year. "As part of its strategy to become the educational, career and workforce management organisation of choice, the board continues

to review acquisition and organic investment opportunities," he said. Mr Milken came to fame during the 1980s when junk bonds were used to finance some of the biggest takeovers in corporate history. The former Barron's Drexel Lambert dealer is still banned from the securities business but has been seeking rehabilitation.

Financial advisers face OFT inquiry

Rupert Jones

THE Office of Fair Trading has started an inquiry into the way financial products and services are sold, following increasing public complaints.

The OFT will focus on the system in place since 1988, which splits financial advisers into two camps — those who can advise only on one company's products and those who can choose from all those on the market — and it could lead to calls for the new Financial Services Authority to change the rules.

The OFT said it was concerned at the number of complaints about independent financial advice that is anything but, as well as hid-

den charges and unfair terms buried in the small print. In the 12 months to September 1997 local government trading standards departments handled more than 50,000 complaints.

Yesterday's move coincides with the publication of a free OFT guide to personal finance, which is designed to help people avoid the many pitfalls and unravel the "gobbledegook".

John Bridgeman, the Director-General of Fair Trading, said: "The terminology is often very confusing, and I am concerned that the level of consumer knowledge in this area is low."

● The OFT's free personal finance guide is available from: OFT, PO Box 366, Hayes, UB3 1XB, tel 0870-606 8321.

TOURIST RATES — BANK BELLS

Australia 2.83	Germany 2.82	Malaysia 6.78	Singapore 2.77
Austria 13.79	Greece 488.45	Netherlands 3.17	South Africa 3.96
Belgium 33.18	Hong Kong 12.28	Norway 12.05	Spain 238.39
Canada 2.40	India 98.57	Portugal 206.21	Sweden 12.88
Cyprus 0.828	Ireland 1.136	Saudi Arabia 6.02	Switzerland 2.268
Denmark 10.82	Israel 5.98	USA 1.687	Turkey 425.100
Finland 8.84	Italy 2.797		USA 1.687
France 6.42			

Supplied by NatWest (excluding rupee, shatel and indollar)

سكانه الاصغر

Sailing

Gales find Cudmore in his element

Bob Fisher at Cowes

NEVER mind the weather. Cowes Week returned to a normal mode when the south-westerly breeze kicked in with a vengeance yesterday and wreaked its own brand of havoc to keep the sailmakers and boat

The racing crews were worried smiles after a becalmed weekend turned into Gale Force Nine Monday. The big winds also brought new names into the frame and tales of what might have been.

"I reckon we were winning," said Kit Horday, skipper of the Class One Independent Bear, "when the boom broke." He might have been right, as the winner of the two major trophies of this week last year was two miles from the line when the breakage occurred and still ended up winning.

It is doubtful, however, that Independent Bear would have beaten the overall winner of the day, Russe Noir 98, the 50-foot Bruce Farr-designed winner of the previous day, sailed by Harold Cudmore.

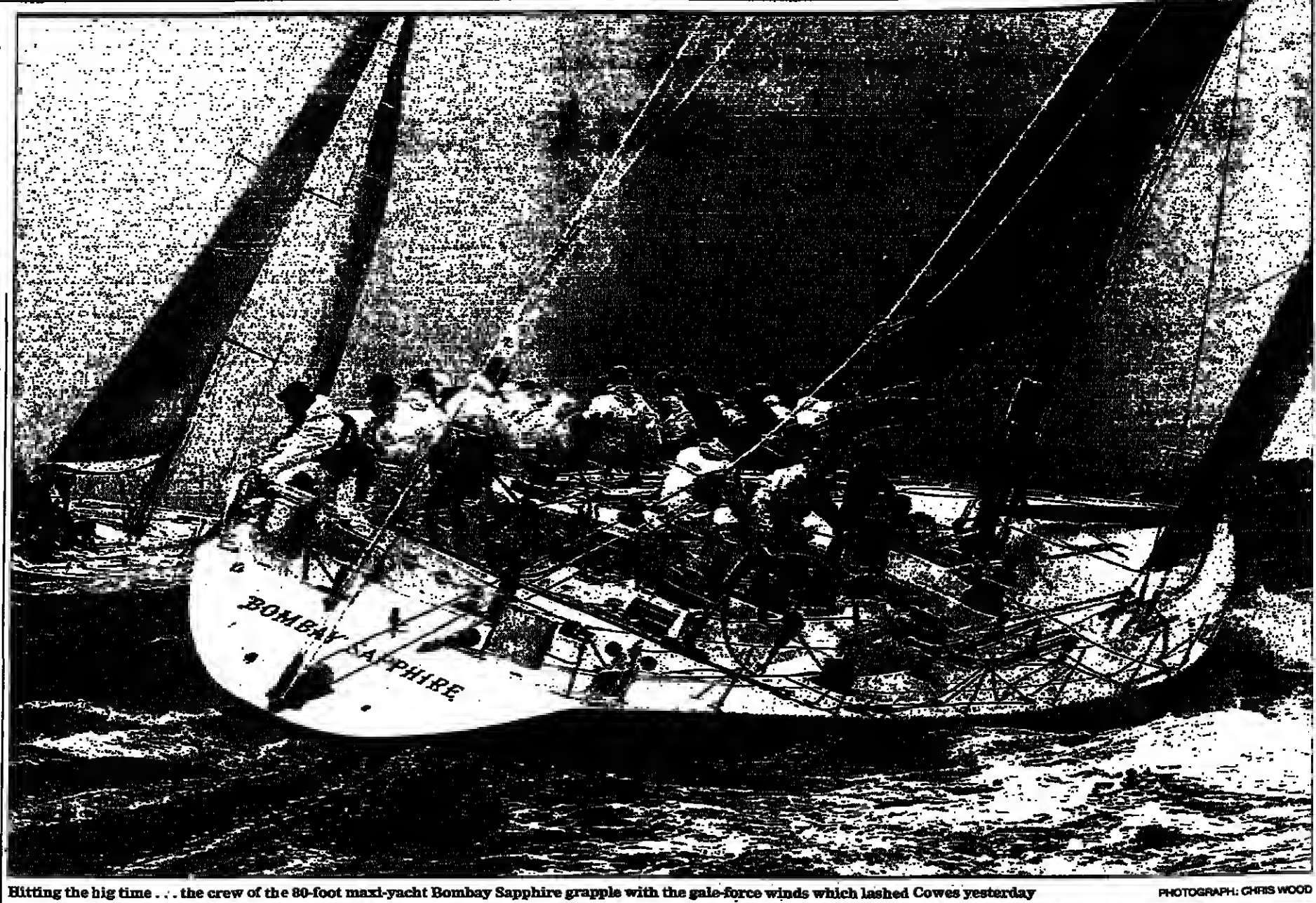
In the 25-30 knot winds, Cudmore's team sailed with

élan, and were looking back at their opponents from the time they left the start line. Only Tony de Mulder, with the Farr 40, Victor V, had any hope of holding off Independent Bear's challenge to the leader. Victor V finished five minutes down on the winner's corrected time but almost three minutes clear of Independent Bear.

Class 2 finally had a completed race with the Jason Ker-designed Shakermaker pulling off a six-minute win over Stephen James's Jacolite. Given that the course was largely dead up wind and down, this was a remarkable performance by the 30-footer against the powerful Swan 40.

In Class 3 the Stephen Jones-designed 28T Thrust went up quickly and then shot off in a cloud of spray from her bow wave on the running legs to win from Peter Beamish's Aztec by two minutes.

Peter Bruce, a regular winner here, confirmed his authority by winning Class 4 with ease over Luc Bertillier's Morina 3. And John Audley made history when he won Class 5 in the 24ft Purple Haze, a race which the boat had won 20 ago.



Hitting the big time... the crew of the 80-foot maxi-yacht Bombay Sapphire grapple with the gale-force winds which lashed Cowes yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS WOOD

Football

Medical puts paid to Gillespie move

Michael Walker

KEITH Gillespie's proposed transfer from Newcastle United to Middlesbrough, which was at such an advanced stage on Sunday morning that Boro announced its completion, has fallen through after the winger failed a medical.

That was the bad news for the 23-year-old Irishman. The good was that Newcastle immediately indicated their willingness to re-open contract negotiations with him.

Gillespie injured his right ankle in a challenge with Colin Calderwood in April, forcing him to miss the FA Cup final, and he has done only light training since. Middlesbrough, it would seem, tried to sign him in the belief that he would be able to play against Leeds United on Saturday week.

The winger, who has not featured in any of Newcastle's pre-season work, cannot do that and as such it explains, and justifies, Kenny Dalglish's annoyance at Middlesbrough's early announcement of a deal.

A statement from Newcastle yesterday said: "The comment by Middlesbrough Foot-

ball Club regarding Keith Gillespie was regrettably more than premature. Although not fully fit, it is true that Keith Gillespie held preliminary discussions with Middlesbrough over the weekend regarding a potential move.

"The Teesside club have said they are unhappy with the fact that the player has not yet fully recovered from the injury. Now Newcastle United expect Keith to return and continue his contract talks in the next few weeks."

It is possible that Middlesbrough could revive the interest once he is fit as the two clubs had agreed a £3.5 million bid for the player, but he has retained a player he did not want to sell.

Sheffield Wednesday yesterday completed a £2.5 million deal for Wim Jonk from PSV Eindhoven. The 31-year-old Dutch defender becomes Danny Wilson's first signing and joins on a three-year contract.

Crystal Palace are hoping to sign the China captain Fan Zhi, a centre-half who can play in midfield, and Sun-Gi, who operates at the back or in the middle, for a combined £1.5 million after both impressed the manager Terry Venables in trials.

Van Hooijdonk boycotts Forest

Peter White

PIERRE van Hooijdonk insists he will start a boycott of Nottingham Forest today in a defiant attempt to leave the newly promoted Premiership club.

The Holland World Cup striker, 28, is due to return to the City Ground today to start his pre-season training after being given extended time off after playing in France 98. But he made it clear last night that he has no intention of travelling to Nottingham and instead will train with one of his former Dutch clubs, NAC Breda.

Van Hooijdonk is unhappy that Forest sold his striking partner Kevin

Campbell to Trabzonspor of Turkey. He is also frustrated that Forest missed out in the chase to sign his fellow countryman, the midfielder Wim Jonk, who has moved to Sheffield Wednesday. He said: "I have asked for a transfer and I am not changing my stance."

Dave Bassett, Forest's manager, reacted angrily to van Hooijdonk's action. He said: "It is time the player started acting in a professional manner. I expect him to be at training and preparing himself for the new season."

"I have made it quite clear to him that I am not accepting his transfer request. He has four years left on his contract and I expect him to honour it."

Pools Forecast

NATIONAL LEAGUE	
FIRST DIVISION	
1 Burnley	2 West Brom
3 Bradford City	4 Stockport
5 Bolton	6 Oxford
7 Bury	8 Rotherham
9 Gillingham	10 Walsley
11 Luton	12 Wrexham
13 Shrewsbury	14 Notts County
15 Grimsby	16 Crewe
17 Northampton	18 Walsley
19 Shrewsbury	20 Walsley
21 Shrewsbury	22 Walsley
23 Shrewsbury	24 Walsley

SECOND DIVISION	
12 Shrewsbury	13 Luton
14 Burnley	15 Rotherham
16 Gillingham	17 Walsley
18 Shrewsbury	19 Notts County
20 Grimsby	21 Crewe
22 Northampton	23 Walsley
24 Shrewsbury	25 Walsley
26 Shrewsbury	27 Walsley
28 Shrewsbury	29 Walsley
30 Shrewsbury	31 Walsley

THIRD DIVISION	
1 Burnley	2 West Brom
3 Bradford City	4 Stockport
5 Bolton	6 Oxford
7 Bury	8 Rotherham
9 Gillingham	10 Walsley
11 Luton	12 Wrexham
13 Shrewsbury	14 Notts County
15 Grimsby	16 Crewe
17 Northampton	18 Walsley
19 Shrewsbury	20 Walsley
21 Shrewsbury	22 Walsley

FOURTH DIVISION	
1 Burnley	2 West Brom
3 Bradford City	4 Stockport
5 Bolton	6 Oxford
7 Bury	8 Rotherham
9 Gillingham	10 Walsley
11 Luton	12 Wrexham
13 Shrewsbury	14 Notts County
15 Grimsby	16 Crewe
17 Northampton	18 Walsley
19 Shrewsbury	20 Walsley
21 Shrewsbury	22 Walsley

Continental game on in millionaires' row

John Duncan on the moves that could make a league for the elite become reality

THOSE who think the one funding the proposed European Super League are worth millions do not know the half of it. It is possible that founders could share a £2 billion windfall from expansion of the elite league should the scheme take off. That, however, must seem a long way off right now.

For a start, there are a series of political hurdles to overcome that will shape how the league begins and evolves. The first problem is that the teams signing up will have to avoid being expelled from their national leagues, something English clubs are already being threatened with.

This appears a potent threat because a European Super League place without domestic competition on top would not be financially attractive, as the loss of gate revenue, television money and domestic interest would make a switch pointless.

In the long run, it is an empty threat. Why? Because if such threats become serious, television companies, which currently pump millions into domestic leagues, will step in. They will be scrambling for rights to the new set-up. Sky in England, for example, will bid for rights to matches in the new league but will not wish to see its investment in the Premier League devalued by defection or expulsion.

Its interest is to have the likes of United and Liverpool

competing in both. It is the one funding the domestic leagues which, after a long game of brinkmanship, means no one is going to be expelled from anything.

The second problem is not invited. The European Super League would have to use cash and tantalising but

vague promises to stop other clubs rocking the boat. The cash incentive could come as some form of tax on income from the new league, to be paid to the domestic league for an interim period. This could buy off a significant number of smaller teams who never had much chance of winning domestic titles anyway.

The really serious wailing, however, will come from the clubs on the fringes of the new league, who currently

compete for European places and have the support to consider themselves major clubs. Plenty will be left out all over Europe. They will have to be bought off by promises of future expansion.

Places in the new elite will be treated as franchises to be bought and sold, an attractive commercial move for the owners and founder clubs. American experience suggests that if the set-up is a success in the first few years, the existing members will

seek permanent expansion, perhaps the creation of two extra divisions, in order to make a return on their investment.

The 20 new places would be auctioned off to the highest bidders and with no possibility of relegation, each franchise would be expected to cost up to £100 million, raising £2 billion, a tempting reason for getting involved at the start of the enterprise.

Before the issue of expansion, however, one conundrum

would remain to be resolved. The major teams all want to be in the same division with each other to guarantee an exciting season. But that would mean creating one very strong division — the 10-club European Division — inevitably leaving some big names languishing in mid-table, while a weaker international Division would make for easier progress to later stages. So the European Division would have to be given the chance of winning extra wild-card entries to the final stages.

This could be achieved by offering the top three teams of both groups an automatic play-off place with a wild-card for fourth and fifth-placed teams. This would mean at least half the teams would be involved in post-season play.

If the elite movers and shakers get a sudden attack of community spirit — admittedly unlikely — they could offer places in an expanded European Super League on a country-by-country basis to give domestic competitions a lift.

They could sell these places to the domestic leagues for distribution at their own whim, attractive for those leagues who would effectively be buying a star prize for their competitions, something UEFA give them practically for free with the three European competitions.

In this way the Premier League, Serie A and the Bundesliga might buy three expansion places each. This would also allow wealthier minor leagues such as Greece limited access to the golden goose. In the meantime there is only a complicated and lucrative game of chicken.

European Super League

There will be two divisions of 10 teams. Each team will play each other within the division with the top four in each going through to a knockout stage.

European Division

- 1 Manchester United
- 2 Arsenal
- 3 Liverpool
- 4 Chelsea
- 5 Tottenham
- 6 Bayern Munich
- 7 Borussia Dortmund
- 8 Juventus
- 9 AC Milan
- 10 Real Madrid

International Division

- 1 Barcelona
- 2 Chelsea
- 3 Lazio
- 4 Ajax
- 5 Feyenoord
- 6 Fiorentina
- 7 Tottenham
- 8 Bayern Munich
- 9 Borussia Dortmund
- 10 Juventus

Expansion 2010

The two divisions become four divisions with each club paying £100m for the privilege

- Everton
- Aston Villa
- Valencia
- Wigan
- Reading
- Derby
- Sheffield Wednesday
- Nottingham Forest
- Ipswich
- Norwich
- Southampton
- Middlesbrough
- Blackpool
- Burnley
- Luton
- Shrewsbury
- Notts County
- Grimsby
- Crewe
- Northampton
- Walsley
- Rotherham
- Oxford
- Stockport
- West Brom
- Burnley
- Luton
- Shrewsbury
- Notts County
- Grimsby
- Crewe
- Northampton
- Walsley
- Rotherham
- Oxford
- Stockport
- West Brom



Sport in brief

Ice Hockey

The Cardiff Devils' Canadian forward Ken Hodge, the club's second highest points scorer last season, has announced his retirement, writes Vic Beal. However, the 32-year-old, who played for NHL teams in Minnesota, Boston and Tampa Bay before joining Cardiff two years ago, will be retained as the Devils' first scouting agent in the United States.

Rugby Union

The Singapore Rugby Union has appointed the former Wallaby wing David Campbell as assistant national team coach in the run-up to the Asian championship to be held in Singapore from October 30 to 31. The championship is the qualifying round for 1999's Rugby World Cup. Campbell will captain Australia in next month's Commonwealth Games in Malaysia.

Hockey

Cannock's 18-year-old Michael Johnson has been called up for the Commonwealth Games on the strength of his performances in South Africa, writes Paul Rowley. England's Oishi D. Luckies (East of England), 18, was named as the Commonwealth Games' best player in the 18-year-old category. Johnson, who played for Cannock in the 18-year-old category, was named as the Commonwealth Games' best player in the 18-year-old category. Johnson, who played for Cannock in the 18-year-old category, was named as the Commonwealth Games' best player in the 18-year-old category.

Results

Golf

ST. JOHN CLASSIC Memphis, Tennessee. Leading final scores (US unless noted): 1. Tiger Woods (US) 65, 67, 69, 68, 270 (54-65-67-69-270); 2. Fred Couples (US) 66, 68, 69, 68, 271 (55-66-68-69-271); 3. Ernie Els (RSA) 67, 69, 68, 68, 272 (56-67-68-68-272); 4. Vijay Singh (IND) 68, 69, 69, 68, 274 (57-68-69-68-274); 5. Retief Goosen (RSA) 69, 69, 69, 68, 275 (58-69-69-68-275); 6. Adam Long (USA) 69, 69, 69, 68, 276 (59-69-69-68-276); 7. Phil Mickelthwait (USA) 69, 69, 69, 68, 277 (60-69-69-68-277); 8. Greg Norman (AUS) 69, 69, 69, 68, 278 (61-69-69-68-278); 9. Mark O'Meara (USA) 69, 69, 69, 68, 279 (62-69-69-68-279); 10. Tom Watson (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 280 (63-69-69-68-280); 11. Nick Faldo (ENG) 69, 69, 69, 68, 281 (64-69-69-68-281); 12. Colin Montgomerie (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 282 (65-69-69-68-282); 13. Stuart Appin (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 283 (66-69-69-68-283); 14. David Howell (ENG) 69, 69, 69, 68, 284 (67-69-69-68-284); 15. Ian Woosnam (WAL) 69, 69, 69, 68, 285 (68-69-69-68-285); 16. Paul Lawrie (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 286 (69-69-69-68-286); 17. Mark Williams (WAL) 69, 69, 69, 68, 287 (70-69-69-68-287); 18. Ian Poulter (ENG) 69, 69, 69, 68, 288 (71-69-69-68-288); 19. Justin Leonard (ENG) 69, 69, 69, 68, 289 (72-69-69-68-289); 20. Simon Dunlop (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 290 (73-69-69-68-290); 21. Ian Macgregor (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 291 (74-69-69-68-291); 22. Mark McNulty (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 292 (75-69-69-68-292); 23. Mark Russell (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 293 (76-69-69-68-293); 24. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 294 (77-69-69-68-294); 25. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 295 (78-69-69-68-295); 26. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 296 (79-69-69-68-296); 27. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 297 (80-69-69-68-297); 28. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 298 (81-69-69-68-298); 29. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 299 (82-69-69-68-299); 30. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 300 (83-69-69-68-300); 31. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 301 (84-69-69-68-301); 32. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 302 (85-69-69-68-302); 33. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 303 (86-69-69-68-303); 34. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 304 (87-69-69-68-304); 35. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 305 (88-69-69-68-305); 36. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 306 (89-69-69-68-306); 37. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 307 (90-69-69-68-307); 38. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 308 (91-69-69-68-308); 39. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 309 (92-69-69-68-309); 40. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 310 (93-69-69-68-310); 41. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 311 (94-69-69-68-311); 42. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 312 (95-69-69-68-312); 43. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 313 (96-69-69-68-313); 44. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 314 (97-69-69-68-314); 45. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 315 (98-69-69-68-315); 46. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 316 (99-69-69-68-316); 47. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 317 (100-69-69-68-317); 48. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 318 (101-69-69-68-318); 49. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 319 (102-69-69-68-319); 50. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 320 (103-69-69-68-320); 51. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 321 (104-69-69-68-321); 52. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 322 (105-69-69-68-322); 53. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 323 (106-69-69-68-323); 54. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 324 (107-69-69-68-324); 55. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 325 (108-69-69-68-325); 56. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 326 (109-69-69-68-326); 57. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 327 (110-69-69-68-327); 58. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 328 (111-69-69-68-328); 59. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 329 (112-69-69-68-329); 60. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 330 (113-69-69-68-330); 61. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 331 (114-69-69-68-331); 62. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 332 (115-69-69-68-332); 63. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 333 (116-69-69-68-333); 64. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 334 (117-69-69-68-334); 65. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 335 (118-69-69-68-335); 66. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 336 (119-69-69-68-336); 67. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 337 (120-69-69-68-337); 68. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 338 (121-69-69-68-338); 69. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 339 (122-69-69-68-339); 70. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 340 (123-69-69-68-340); 71. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 341 (124-69-69-68-341); 72. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 342 (125-69-69-68-342); 73. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 343 (126-69-69-68-343); 74. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 344 (127-69-69-68-344); 75. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 345 (128-69-69-68-345); 76. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 346 (129-69-69-68-346); 77. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 347 (130-69-69-68-347); 78. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 348 (131-69-69-68-348); 79. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 349 (132-69-69-68-349); 80. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 350 (133-69-69-68-350); 81. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 351 (134-69-69-68-351); 82. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 352 (135-69-69-68-352); 83. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 353 (136-69-69-68-353); 84. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 354 (137-69-69-68-354); 85. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 355 (138-69-69-68-355); 86. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 356 (139-69-69-68-356); 87. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 357 (140-69-69-68-357); 88. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 358 (141-69-69-68-358); 89. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 359 (142-69-69-68-359); 90. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 360 (143-69-69-68-360); 91. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 361 (144-69-69-68-361); 92. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 362 (145-69-69-68-362); 93. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 363 (146-69-69-68-363); 94. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 364 (147-69-69-68-364); 95. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 365 (148-69-69-68-365); 96. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 366 (149-69-69-68-366); 97. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 367 (150-69-69-68-367); 98. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 368 (151-69-69-68-368); 99. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 369 (152-69-69-68-369); 100. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 370 (153-69-69-68-370); 101. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 371 (154-69-69-68-371); 102. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 372 (155-69-69-68-372); 103. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 373 (156-69-69-68-373); 104. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 374 (157-69-69-68-374); 105. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 375 (158-69-69-68-375); 106. Mark Brown (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 376 (159-69-69-68-376); 107. Mark Walker (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 377 (160-69-69-68-377); 108. Mark Johnston (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 378 (161-69-69-68-378); 109. Mark Bennett (SCO) 69, 69, 69, 68, 379 (16

Rugby Union

Clubs wait for French blessing

Robert Kitson on a Toulouse meeting which will shape the domestic season

ENGLAND's top clubs, willing to reshape the All-Ireland league structure to add a European dimension to their new season, should learn tomorrow whether their stubborn 110-hour attempt to create a viable alternative tournament will receive the desired French embrace or just a resigned Gallic shrug.

A gathering of the top 24 French clubs in Toulouse today will be followed by the all-important meeting between a delegation of their representatives, headed by Serge Blanco, and French Rugby Federation officials in the same city 24 hours later.

Any chance of a new cross-border competition to replace the worse-for-wear Heineken Cup, which the English clubs have abandoned, hinges on the French federation's blessing as required by International Board rules.

With Premiership teams, out to mention supporters and sponsorship managers, screaming for the domestic fixture list with only a month to go before the season kicks off, even English First Division Rugby officials admit things are being cut fine.

The Rugby Football Union's new management board chairman Brian Balster dismisses the logistics as "impossible" last week, subsequent correspondence led to a more diplomatic "partnership" statement yesterday, in which the RFU "agreed to open urgent discussions with the other unions". Balster has already written to upset the sponsors, insisting a final verdict must be delivered by Sunday.

Ash remains upbeat. "It's not a deadline, it's a suggestion. If we come back and say 'We're making huge progress', no one's going to cut something off for the sake of a few days rather than weeks to get this organised."

much as players' preferences. Doug Ash, the chief executive of English First Division Rugby, was claiming yesterday any new tournament would not be any worse off in this regard because he believes Heineken and BSKYB have already decided to pull the plug.

European Rugby Cup, the organisers of the Heineken Cup, whose goose will be cooked if the French federation gives the nod to a fresh competition, still insists its tournament will start in mid-September.

"While I accept we're going to have to run uphill quite fast over the next week or so, equally I don't think ERC has a viable alternative," said Ash, galvanised by the decision of nine leading French clubs to withdraw from the existing European set-up last week. "Clearly what we want is out an odds-on favourite to happen, but we'll give it our best shot."

To try and buy more time, there is even the bizarre prospect of premier English clubs being issued with the first five weeks of the fixture-list, with the rest to follow. If the European green light is given, drastic changes will have to be made to the original structured season of 26 league games in total, and Ash confirmed at least two proposals are on the table.

The first would be to split the 14 Premiership One clubs into two conferences of seven, yielding 12 regular-season games, or else have them play each other only once, with play-offs in the spring. Any September fixtures thus have to satisfy at least three criteria.

It is all getting a bit silly. London Scottish, for example, have found themselves pitted against five different opponents on the opening day already and the RFU, anxious not to upset the sponsors, is insisting a final verdict must be delivered by Sunday.

Ash remains upbeat. "It's not a deadline, it's a suggestion. If we come back and say 'We're making huge progress', no one's going to cut something off for the sake of a few days rather than weeks to get this organised."



Shivering Sri Lanka find cold comfort in the wet

County Championship: Worcestershire v Yorkshire

Gough consumes five alive

David Foot at New Road

THERE were 15 overs left and the rain was returning when Phil Newport became Darren Gough's fifth wicket to give Yorkshire a victory by an innings and 160 runs to take them to fourth in the table.

If there was any doubt about the final minutes of the match — Newport certainly seemed to think he had put bat on ball before the low decision — Yorkshire were still worthy winners. Worcester-

shire had lost eight wickets yesterday in just over two hours and were all out for 94.

Only bad weather was going to foil them. Play eventually started at 2.30pm and Yorkshire appeared to have too much to do. But some spirited bowling by Gough and Gavin Hamilton exposed the threadbare nature of the Worcestershire innings.

The England fast bowler could not have sought a more fruitful preamble for Headingley. Thick in the hips,

buoyant in the heart, he had barely got to the field before taking three wickets in 15 balls, to open up a match which had seemed destined for a draw under heavy skies.

Graeme Hick steered and pulled four before, for the second time in the game, he was caught at backward point. Vikram Solanki followed, caught at the second

attempt at the wicket, and Tom Moody would have rapidly gone too if Darren Lehmann had reacted more briskly to the ball which flew past his right shoulder at third slip. Lehmann compensated with an easier chance not long after.

For a brief time Worcestershire discovered the elusive quality of insipid resistance that was necessary. Indeed Stuart Lampitt, night watchman, stayed in all for two and a half hours, wisely, and mechanically, offering a dead bat. He was ninth out, taken behind off Richard Stamp, and he walked immediately to relieve the umpire of any responsibility.

If Gough (five for 36) was an exemplary bowler, so was Hamilton (four for 17), even more so, on 14 overs. He tightened his line and produced genuinely honest pace. David Leatherdale, who had batted relatively well, was deceived enough to be the latest victim of that 1998 epidemic of playing no shot when he should have, out lbw.

Steve Rhodes disappeared first ball while Richard Illingworth, needing a runner because of a hamstring injury, was out to a fine low gully catch by James Middlebrook. This was Yorkshire with their tall up. Stamp hardly gave away a run in nine overs but it was always going to be the seamers' afternoon.

still at the crease when the rain intervened again.

At a murky County Championship games were affected by weather — there was no play at all at Old Trafford or Trent Bridge — Durham managed to avoid defeat against Hampshire at Southampton thanks to rain and an undefeated last-wicket stand of 61 between Martin Speight and Steve Lugg.

Durham, yet to lose to Hampshire in the Championship, resumed their second innings in the afternoon only 95 runs ahead but Speight, with a superb 97, and his able assistant Lugg, who made three singles from 50 balls, were

Tea was taken early in the hope of a re-start, but another heavy shower ruled out any chance of a resumption.

Tennis

Hardcourts to ease Henman into top ten

Stephen Barley

DESPITE losing the final of the Mercedes Cup against Andre Agassi in Los Angeles at the weekend, Tim Henman will have arrived in Toronto for this week's Du Maurier Canadian Open fired with the belief that he can reach the world's top 10 for the first time via the hardcourts of North America.

Henman's words after his 6-4, 6-4 defeat by the resurgent Agassi were familiar enough. "You have to be at the top of your game to beat someone like Andre. I lost, but I will take away a lot of positives."

The positives are that he has already won more matches this year around Wimbledon than last year in four tournaments between Wimbledon and the end of the US Open.

Henman was the second seed in California, the men he has to reach the final were not particularly demanding — Grant Stafford of South Africa, the American Jeff Tarango, Zimbabwe's Byron Black and Guillaume Raoux of France — but the British No. 2 is notorious for losing early in tournaments to players of far less talent.

However, there were pointers during his run in the Wimbledon semi-finals that Henman's concentration, his real Achilles' heel, was beginning to sharpen. He was not at his best in Los Angeles, his first tournament since Wimbledon, but the discipline that had seen him through a few wobbles on the SW19 grass was again apparent.

Last year Henman suffered one of his worst embarrassments in the first round of the Canadian Open where he lost to a local player, Sebastian Lehtinen, of whom nothing much had been heard before and less since.

Six of the world's top 10 are in Toronto, with Henman seeded at seven. Pete Sampras, who underwent a minor foot operation two weeks ago, is playing his first tournament since winning the Wimbledon title and may meet Agassi for a place in the semi-finals. Both are on the opposite side of the draw to Henman.

Los Angeles was Agassi's second title in a row, procured with his 11th consecutive match victory since his second-round defeat by Germany's Tommy Haas at Wimbledon. The 28-year-old American has not dropped one set in this fine run, or indeed even faced a single set point.

On Sunday Henman, playing his sixth ATP Tour final but his first in the United States, began nervously and had his serve broken in the third game. With the score at 30-30 he was disturbed by a mobile phone, the bane of modern life, and smashed a simple overhead into the net. Agassi piled on the pressure with a series of punishing drives from the baseline, while Henman continued to struggle with his serve. He survived a break-point in the seventh game and was taken to deuce in the ninth before Agassi won the opening set with a love game.

A seventh set at 30-40 managed to save Henman from being broken in the opening game of the second set but Agassi eventually turned the screw in the fifth. Henman broke back bravely but he lost his serve again in the seventh game and Agassi efficiently closed out the match for his 38th career title.

The women's Tour event in California saw the top-seeded Lindsay Davenport outlast Venus Williams in 90-degree heat to take the Bank of the West title 6-4, 5-7, 6-4.

Williams, who raised 14 aces and eight double faults, took two injury time-outs during the second set and ended the final with her left leg and knee strapped.

Scoreboard

Britannic Assurance County Championship

DERBYSHIRE v KENT

Derbyshire (1st) drew with Kent (2nd) at Trent Bridge.

Derbyshire: 1st innings 100 (DeFreitas 5-50, Dean 4-52).

Derbyshire: 2nd innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 1st innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 3rd innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 2nd innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 4th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 3rd innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 5th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 4th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 6th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 5th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 7th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 6th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 8th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 7th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 9th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 8th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 10th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 9th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 11th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 10th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 12th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 11th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 13th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 12th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 14th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 13th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

Derbyshire: 15th innings 280 (R M S Watson 87, Hendry 5-24).

Kent: 14th innings 104-6 (M A Salmon not out, M Fleming not out, Bates 105, 102).

Total (for 5, 44.2 overs): 129

No play, rain

Old Trafford Leicestershire 218-7 (A Hebble 28 v Lancashire, Lancashire 102-6) drew with Leicestershire (1st).

Trent Bridge Northants 345 (M G 4-62, Nottinghamshire 320-6 (P Johnson 105, U Akmal 105, G E Weston 56, Taylor 4-52, Nottinghamshire 112) drew with Northants (1st).

Leicestershire went second in the table after overnight rain at Old Trafford saw their top-four clash abandoned as a draw as hour before yesterday's scheduled start time — which meant that only 450 overs in all were allowed in the match.

The bonus points for Leicestershire's 218 for seven were enough to take Leicestershire to six points, and the visitors four, enough to lift the Leicestershire above Gloucestershire who stay fourth.

But Gloucestershire and Surrey were the real winners. Surrey won 40 points clear after their victory over Sussex while Gloucestershire won 30 points after a strong showing without even playing.

Gloucestershire now have two games in hand on Surrey and will be both would see them take over at the top. The first is another top-four clash against Lancashire at Old Trafford starting on Wednesday, weather permitting.

Minor Counties Championship

Worcestershire 195 and 227-6 (U L Taylor 70, S M Parris 58), Herefordshire 181, Match drawn, Herefordshire (2nd), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

Devon 314 and 314-6 (R M Mowbray 50, Dorset 202, Abingdon 50, Devon 105), Devon (2nd), Dorset (1st), Wiltshire (1st).

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Donald in hot water for his Kitchen blast

ALLAN Donald could be fined or suspended by the International Cricket Council for his criticism of the umpire Mervyn Kitchen's decisions in the Fourth Test at Trent Bridge.

The ICC code of conduct forbids players from complaining on umpiring decisions that are "unfair or unjust".

It was Kitchen's admission that he made mistakes during the match and was considering his future at Test level which prompted Donald to say umpiring decisions had swung the game in England's favour.

"I think Merv has realized that he had a few shockers... well, a few shocking decisions that he did make in that Test match which swung it," Donald told BBC Radio.

"These kind of things are pressure beyond belief — he just looked to me like he was struggling," he said.

"For a man to admit that he has made some bad mistakes and then say that maybe he should hang up the boots... if it comes from the heart he must really mean it," he added.

"If you lose your concentration you're messing with people's careers. One decision in the heat of the moment can swing a game."

Donald said he played in previous matches under Kitchen's adjudication and had the utmost respect for him but he suggested that if Kitchen had doubts he should retire.

"You're not up to it, then maybe it's time to get out of the game than cause yourself more damage," he said.

Mark Ramprakash was fined 25 per cent of his match fee and had a one-Test ban suspended for six months after the ICC ruled he disrupted an umpiring decision during the Second Test.

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Prost and Stewart feel the heat, page 13
Henman buoyant in defeat, page 15

Gillespie transfer bites the dust, page 14
Gough hurries Yorkshire to victory, page 15

SportsGuardian

Big three pledge to put Euro plans on hold

Martin Thorpe sees United, Arsenal and Liverpool pull back from brink

MANCHESTER United, Arsenal and Liverpool have guaranteed the Premier League that they will put on hold any plans to sign up to a breakaway European Super League until next month.

However, the three clubs have been warned that if they go back on their word they will face disciplinary action including the ultimate sanction of expulsion from the Premiership.

The Premier League is determined to resist a breakaway by persuading potential rebels to stay on board and work for changes in European club competition from within.

To that end the Premier League last Thursday asked the three clubs for written assurances that they were not about to break away.

In response, the trio agreed not to make any decision or take any action on the matter until it could be discussed by all 20 Premiership clubs at their next meeting on September 3 in London.

This, of course, does not guarantee the breakaway project's demise. Yesterday the sports management group behind the planned launch of the Super League in 2000, Media Partners, met in London with the law firm advising on the venture, Slaughter and May, to further work on the £2 billion proposals.

The three English clubs have also signalled their seriousness by arranging to meet European Commission officials on September 7 to discover if the governing bodies, Fifa and Uefa, plus the English Football Association, have the right to carry out their threat to ban any rebel clubs.

However, by gaining the undertakings from the three clubs, the Premier League has won some breathing space. "We have received written assurances from those clubs who have been at the forefront of recent speculation," said the Premier League spokesman Mike Les. "and our clubs have pledged to work together to take forward a discussion on a future shape of European club competitions."

The meeting of clubs in September will discuss this issue and we will look then at any further representations we need to make to Uefa. We want to see this resolved with proper and constructive dialogue."

However, if the September 3 meeting discovers any of the three clubs have already committed themselves to a Super League, disciplinary action will almost certainly follow.

The Premier League is against any breakaway competition for two principal reasons. First, other Premiership clubs are unhappy that the proposed new competition has no right of entry based on playing merit to those outside the self-elected elite.

Second, it is concerned that breakaway clubs would have too many European games under the proposed new structure to fulfil all their Premiership fixtures.

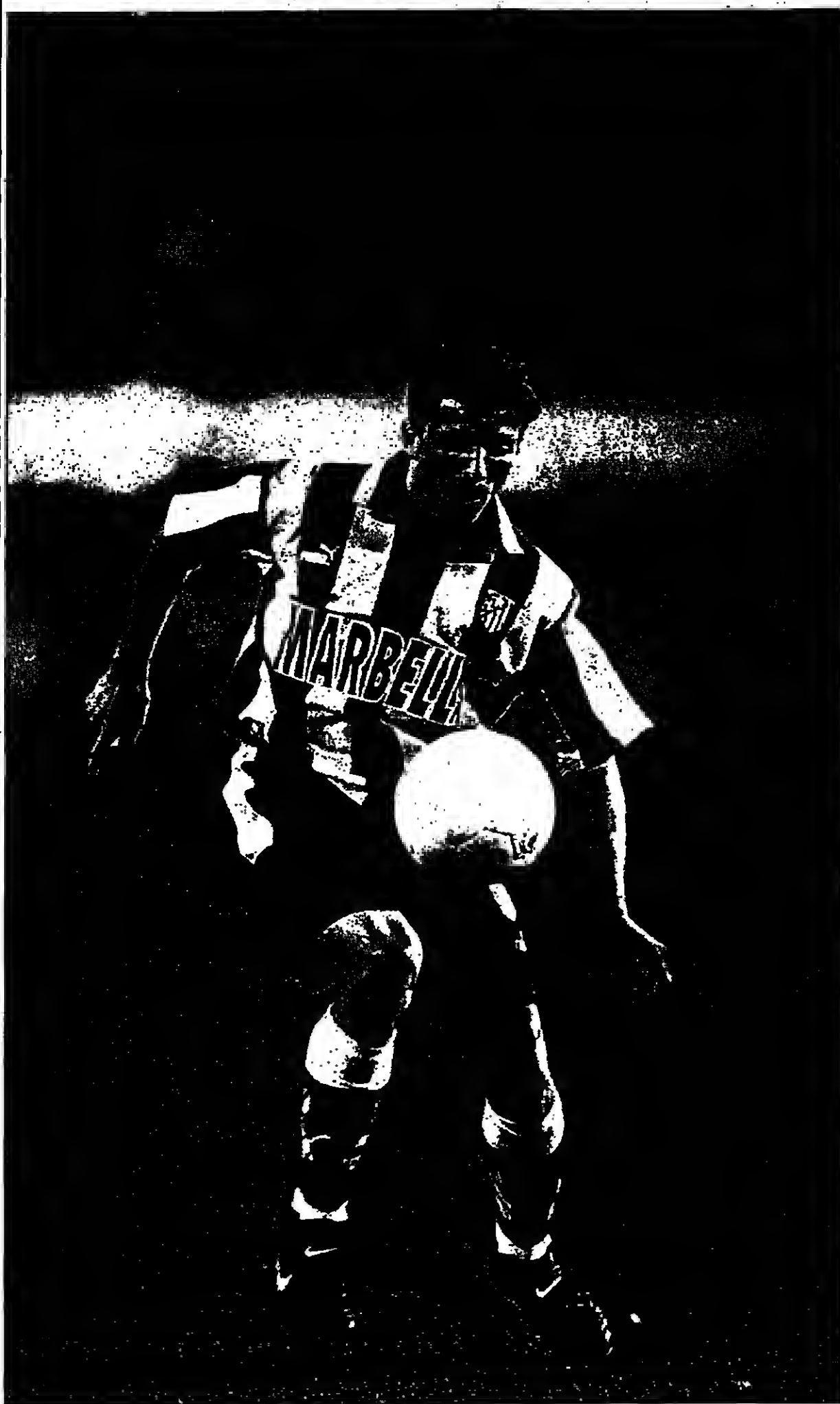
The Premier League hopes that a breakaway can be averted if Uefa agrees to a drastic overhaul of its European club competitions.

Eventually the continent's top clubs want the current Champions League format replaced by a 32-40 team league comprising three or four divisions which would guarantee more money-spinning games. They are scheduled to be played in mid-week.

In the meantime, the clubs might settle for a greater slice of the Champions League television and marketing income, if Uefa were to agree.

Turn to page 14, column 8

Brazilian forward now Gregory's goal



Fit for action... Aston Villa are hoping to tempt Juninho who has now recovered from injury

Treading the boards with Ally's Army



Jim White

COLIN PATERSON was only four years old at the time. But still, as is the case for many a Scot, the phrase "Argentina 1978" is lodged somewhere deep in his memory, an itch that refuses to be scratched away.

"The main thing I remember of the '78 World Cup is my brother and me being sent to bed at half-time in the Holland match," he says. "And hearing a great crash from downstairs, when my Dad smashed a lamp jumping up to celebrate as Archie Gemmill scored."

Paterston senior's leap, as so many ecstatic leaps that night, was cruelly premature, sent spinning down to earth by goal difference in a four-team group. Twenty years on Paterston junior is trying to exorcise the family trauma by writing a stage play about Ally MacLeod's World Cup effort, *Argentina '78: The Director's Cut*, which premieres at the Edinburgh Festival on Friday.

"It is best described as stand-up tragedy," says Paterston of his show. "It's a group of us telling the story through anecdotes and gag, from the high of MacLeod taking over the Scotland management and persuading the whole country that we could win, through to the utter humiliation of the campaign itself."

This is not the only show on this year's festival bill to be inspired by football. There's a Scottish Ryebrake-style shuffle called *Goal* (intriguingly featuring Jackie McNamara's brother) and an all-women play, *Beaver Pitch*, into which it is probably not advisable to probe too deep.

But Paterston's piece is the one which touches a local nerve, bathed as it is in nostalgia for a time when Scottish football represented something worth satirising. Comic figure that he now is, at least MacLeod displayed a bit of confidence in himself and his fellow-countrymen. No Scot these days would make any claim for their football.

"I was at the World Cup this year and it was all so negative, even the bloody song was negative," says Paterston. "And the thing which struck me was that of all the Scotland

tops I saw people wearing, no one had names or numbers on the back. We've got no heroes any more. The only one I can recall was someone with a shirt reading '78: MacLeod'."

Indeed it can only be a matter of time before the World Wide Fund for Nature is called in to classify the Scottish footballer as an endangered species. On Sunday the Premier League season kicked off in Edinburgh, a mile or so from the theatre which is staging Paterston's play, with a game between Europe and The Rest of the World, or Hearts v Rangers as it was billed in the programme.

Meanwhile, Brian McClair said in this paper last week he was astonished to discover that the dressing-room at his new club, Motherwell, was well populated with fans. And it is not even as if the host load of foreigners being brought in to replace the native talent is any good. Walter Smith admits that when he went on his spending spree for Rangers at the start of the Nineties, the Italians would never let him near a useful player; those who they offered up for sale, he quickly realised, were shop-soiled.

So now hordes of non-internationals and has-beens are falling over each other on the way to the Royal Bank of Scotland, where they may be huge crowds flocking in to Scottish grounds this season, but most of the fans will be there out of curiosity to see how Giovanni van Bronckhorst's name fits on to the back of his shirt.

THE Scottish FA realised some years ago that the short-termism inherent in a 10-team top flight would lead to a furthering of the youth production line, since relegation threatens bankruptcy even to the best-run clubs with it. In turn means that no manager faced with the probability of losing his job in defeat is encouraged to blood young players.

One of the Scottish Premier League's first measures was to insist from this season that its 10 teams include a minimum of two under-21 players among their substitutes. Too little and too late are words which spring to mind.

Meanwhile those seeking a little diversion from all the gloom had better hurry to Paterston's play. Its run ends a week before the Edinburgh Festival as a whole folds up the big top. Which is appropriate really: a show about a Scottish World Cup campaign finishing before everyone else.

Argentina '78: The Director's Cut is at The Gilded Balloon, Edinburgh, August 7-21

Villa in £10m move to link Juninho with Yorke

Peter White and Russell Thomas

ASTON VILLA's manager John Gregory is ready to make a £10 million offer for Juninho in an ambitious attempt to pair the Brazilian with Dwight Yorke in a formidable front partnership.

Gregory appears determined to demonstrate to the unsettled Yorke that Villa are genuine contenders for honours in the face of an almost certain new initiative by Manchester United for the striker after United's projected £20 million deal for Milan's Patrick Kluivert broke down yesterday.

Villa's manager already has about £15 million to spend on players. Now Gregory wants to prise Juninho away from Atletico Madrid and hopes to start negotiations when the Spanish club play Chelsea in Arnhem today.

He said last night that "a Villa representative will be in Holland to watch Atletico's friendly. There has been a change of management at the Spanish club recently, and I understand some of their players could be available. I do not know yet if Juninho is among them."

"However, I have made a telephone call to confirm that Juninho is fully fit and playing again following his serious ankle injury."

The first problem for Gregory is convincing Atletico to sell. Last night the club's president Jesus Gil said he had received a fax confirming Villa's interest but that he did not want to part with Juninho.

The other fear for Gregory is that Villa's chairman Doug Ellis, if he sanctions a £10 million deal for Juninho, may insist on selling Yorke in a straight cash transfer of around £12 million.

Gregory said: "I don't think United have conducted matters particularly well. They have certainly dragged things out."

He added: "I just have a feeling this thing will not go away until after the deadline for signing players for the Champions League on August 20."

In Italy, Milan's spokesman Paolo Tarozzi shrugged off the failure of United's initiative for Kluivert, despite the chairman Martin Edwards' plans to discuss personal terms with the Dutch World Cup striker tomorrow. "Nothing is certain in football," said Tarozzi, who said Kluivert had now asked to stay.

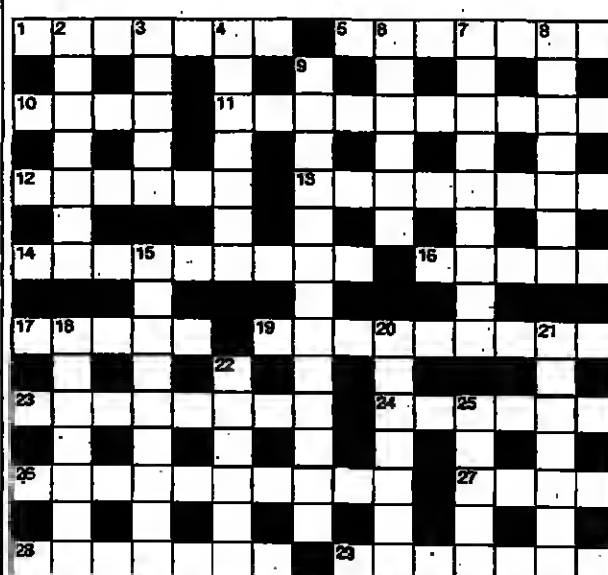
Tarozzi explained that the player met Milan's sporting director Arleido Braxia in Holland "and the club is now happy for the player to stay with us. All along, this has been what the club's coach, Alberto Zaccharoni, has wanted."

If the high-water mark has been reached for the politically correct broadening and deepening process that has followed the 1960s civil rights legislation, then gay equality may find itself last in and first out.
The latest battle for Middle America

G2 cover story

Guardian Crossword No 21,344

Set by Araucaria



Across

- 1 A new of disapproval? (7)
- 5 Beg for Socratic Verses etc? (7)
- 10 See 18
- 11 Much rain told us curb would be needed (10)
- 12, 14 Part of Stalin — which, with Castro's support, follows usual worm's rendering (5,9)
- 13 Dickensian police-station — the French get close (8)
- 14 See 12
- 16, 10, 27 Old Mr Spindleshanks in "The Flight of the Crane"? (5-4-4)
- 17 See 22
- 19 Portable weaponry, as opposed to 10 27? (5,4)
- 23 Spotted return of old lawyer, Liberal, being quick about it (6)

Down

- 2 One may be called in Spanish the see-you-later fruit (7)
- 3 Very sad, without model going up in smoke (5)
- 4 Left turn throw, in the first place, Herrick's girl (7)
- 6 Doctor in Latin, I say to myself (5)
- 7 Amorous don keeps wayward Johnson in US city and European capital (8)
- 8 Got up, and whence, where Peace may be found (3,4)

- 9 Conventionally so placed (4,3,6)
- 15 Lawyer joins chemical company in Sun Hill (8)
- 18 Say why axle-pin broke (7)
- 20 Statuesque bit of cheek? (7)
- 21 Runner first in stable feature (7)
- 22, 17 Aid to propagating blackbird in fictional village (11)
- 25 Small internal adjustment makes adhesives red (5)

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